DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 414 346 UD 032 005

AUTHOR	Walsh, Joan
TITLE	Stories of Renewal: Community Building and the Future of Urban America.
INSTITUTION	Rockefeller Foundation, New York, NY.
PUB DATE	1996-00-00
NOTE	53p.; Not specifically concerned with education, but several of the case studies refer to school situations. Printed on colored paper. Photographs may not reproduce clearly.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Case Studies; Community Change; *Community Development; *Economic Factors; Government Role; Inner City; Low Income Groups; *Poverty; Program Effectiveness; Social Support Groups; Urban Areas; Urban Problems; *Urban Renewal

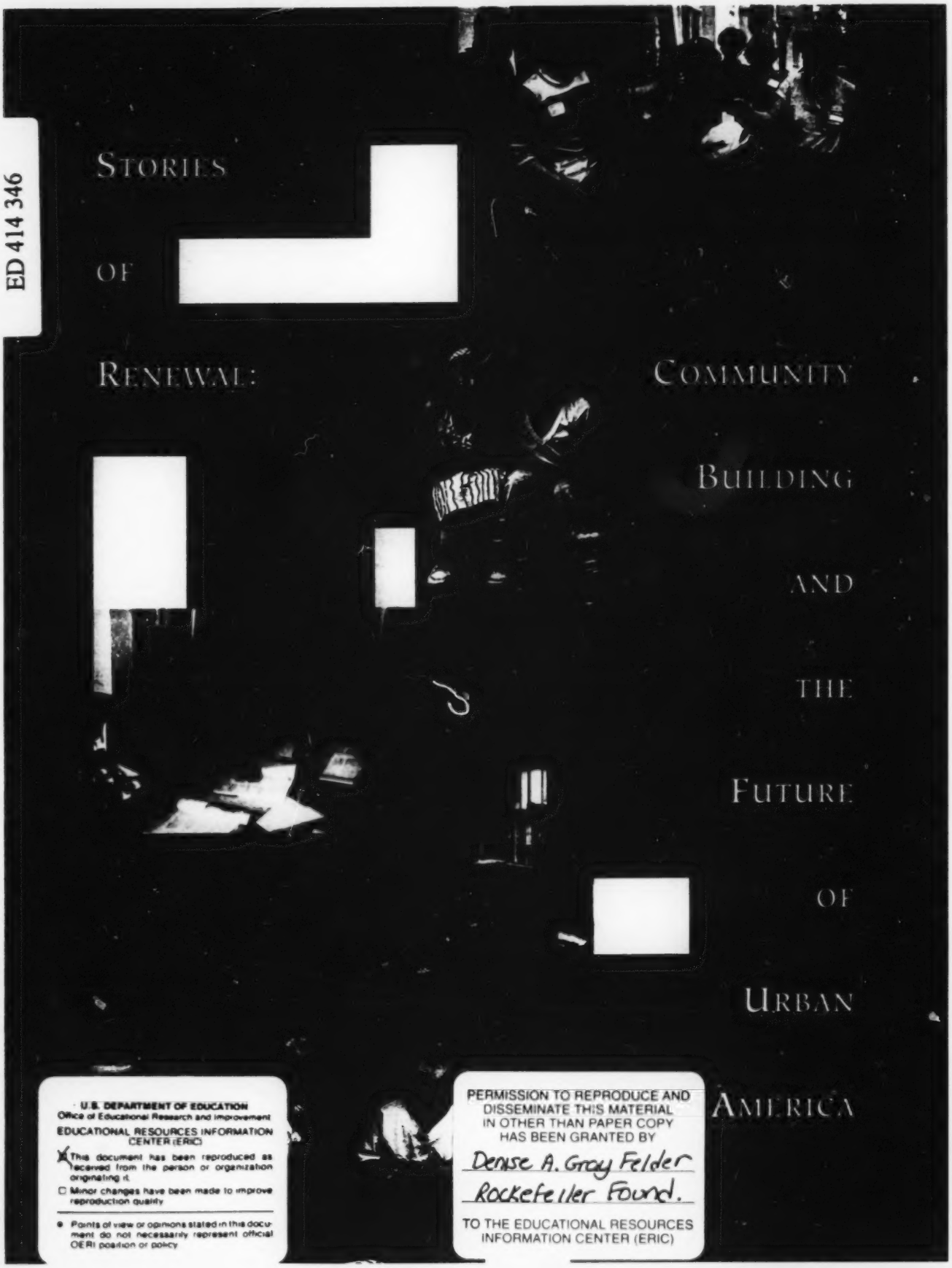
ABSTRACT

Community building is an approach to urban poverty that rejects a programmatic approach in favor of efforts that catalyze personal relationships and social networks to improve community life. Community building analyzes urban poverty as a web of interwoven problems that can lock families out of opportunity permanently. Community building initiatives try to address the economic, social, and political marginalization of urban communities. The best community initiatives make progress on most fronts, but none has had equal success on all fronts. In examining initiatives with something to share, this report focuses on initiatives that have the most to teach in specific areas. Engaging government systems is illustrated by a case study of the Chatham-Savannah Youth Futures Authority (Georgia). The Comprehensive Community Revitalization Project in the South Bronx (New York) illustrates the importance of building local institutions that can provide needed services. Investing in outreach and organizing is illustrated by Community Building in Partnership, Baltimore (Maryland). Involving the corporate sector in social, political, and economic agenda is illustrated by the Atlanta Project (Georgia). Oakland's Urban Strategies Council (California) shows the importance of developing new structures to facilitate activities on many fronts. Part One closes with four personal accounts that show community-building strategies in use. Part Two examines issues from the field in the five areas explored through case studies, and the conclusion discusses the unfinished business of community building. (SLD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 414 346

Stories of Renewal: Community Building and the Future of Urban America



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Denise A. Gray Felder
Rockefeller Found.

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Stories of Renewal: Community Building and the Future of Urban America

A Report from the Rockefeller Foundation
by Joan Walsh

January 1997

About the author: Joan Walsh is an associate editor of Pacific News Service based in San Francisco.

Copyright © 1996 by The Rockefeller Foundation
420 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10018-2702
(212) 869-8500

website: www.rockfound.org

All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the written permission of the copyright owners.

Photo Credits: The Rockefeller Foundation wishes to thank the following photographers for the use of their photographs:
Courtesy of The Carter Center: Pages 11, 14
Courtesy of The Enterprise Foundation: Cover, Page 1
Courtesy of the Urban Strategies Council: Pages 18, 22
Courtesy of Youth Futures Authority, Savannah: Page 3
Thomas S. England: Page 13
Don Pollard: Cover, Pages 3, 4, 5, 11, 12, 17, 28, 35, 37
Andrew Rhoden and The Mid-Bronx Desperados: Pages 7, 8, 9
Kathy Sloane: Pages x, 21, 25
Nita Winter: Cover, Pages 1, 18, 22, 23, 24, 30, 34, 35, 39

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Foreword ii

Preface iii

Introduction v

Part One: Community Building in Practice 1

Chatham-Savannah Youth Futures Authority 2

The Comprehensive Community Revitalization Project in the South Bronx . . . 6

The Atlanta Project 10

Baltimore's **Community Building in Partnership** 16

Oakland's **Urban Strategies Council** 20

Community Building in Four Institutions 24

Part Two: Lessons from the Field 31

Engaging Government Systems 32

Building Local Institutions 32

Investing in Outreach and Organizing 33

Involving the Corporate Sector 33

Developing New Structures 34

Five Pillars of Community Building 35

Race Matters 38

Conclusion 39

Author's Acknowledgments 40

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

For the past decade, in cities all across America, new and unusual partnerships have been trying to expand opportunities for inner city residents whom other Americans seem prepared to forget. These hardy alliances gather momentum and draw their strength from community-building strategies that seek to reweave the fabric of social cooperation that has historically provided Americans with pathways to stable and productive futures.

For seven years I worked in Oakland, California, at the Urban Strategies Council, with a remarkable staff and dedicated partners attempting to create and apply the community-building strategies described in this report. Though inventing as we went along, we felt that we were onto something. We were also pretty sure that our inventions had legs (could be applied elsewhere); but that's hard to know when you're working in isolation from other communities. Connecting with other urban reformers, through the National Community Building Network, we met colleagues who were reaching similar conclusions about strategies to address poverty. It was inspiring and sustaining. But we knew that to have national impact our optimism and strategies had to reach a larger audience.

Meanwhile, the Rockefeller Foundation had been an early and steady partner with many around the country in establishing a base of knowledge and examples of effective community-building practices seeking to expand economic and social opportunity. Part of the impetus for my accepting this position at the foundation was to have access to a platform from which to launch a broader conversation about opportunity, equity and community building.

It's not easy to describe community building; it tends to either sound like past efforts, or too soft and elusive to constitute a field. At the Rockefeller Foundation we define it as continuous, self-renewing efforts by residents and professionals to engage in collective action, aimed at problem solving and enrichment, that creates new or strengthened social networks, new capacities for group action and support, and new standards and expectations for life in the community.

Community building assumes that associations within a geographic area are important for community well-being; that bringing together a broad spectrum of stakeholders will provide a better understanding of problems; that sustainable solutions are based on knowing the facts, building on assets, and having a shared vision of improvement; and that an independent community-based capacity for analysis, planning and convening is essential for success.

Those carefully crafted words describe community building; they don't let the reader see or feel what it means. To better understand the field I sought the assistance of Joan Walsh, the author of this report, who brought a critical journalist's eye to the story. I worked with Joan in Oakland where she served as our historian and diarist. Joan's thoughtful accounts of our work, frustrations and struggles allowed us to hold ourselves accountable and render honest critiques of our achievements and failures. She is a wonderful listener whose analytical abilities are legend. The stories she captures in this report breathe life into community-building definitions and assumptions. The lessons that she presents provide proof that indeed these community-building strategies have legs that just might be ready to run.

With optimism,

Angela Glover Blackwell
Senior Vice President
The Rockefeller Foundation

Early in the research for this report, on a site visit to a community-building project in a corner of the South Bronx, I had a nagging sense of déjà vu. I knew I had been in this neighborhood before. Jerome Avenue, Tremont Avenue, Walton Avenue; these street names were familiar to me, and I seemed to recall that my father had grown up on these rugged urban hills surrounding Yankee Stadium. I called my uncle in New Jersey — my father had passed away years before — and he confirmed my vague memory. And more than that: he offered to take me on a tour of his old neighborhood. So we set out on a Saturday morning for a visit that was part family history, part sociology. I went with a question: What had existed in the South Bronx that let my grandparents raise their children from poverty into the middle class, but had disappeared for the families that followed them?

Having been there already, I knew the neighborhood was on its way up from its nadir in the 1970s. My family had visited a few times, from our home on suburban Long Island, when I was a small child, but by the mid-1960s our visits stopped, for good. The last time my father toured the South Bronx, in the late 1970s, he'd been stopped by the police — a white man in a rental car meant either a drug buyer or a confused tourist — and once they confirmed he was the latter, they escorted him back to the freeway, to insure his "safety."

In 1996 you could still see the scars of arson in the neighborhood, the vacant lots that once held housing and now serve as unofficial garbage dumps. But the streets felt safe in daylight and my uncle and I attracted little attention that Saturday morning except when we blocked traffic to peer at an old house, or more frequently, to look for one that had burned or been torn down.

There were a lot of them. My father's parents had moved often, as the poor tend to do. Irish immigrants, they had six children in nine years, paralleling the Great Depression. My grandfather was a migrant manufacturing worker who prospered only as World War II approached, when he traveled around the country in teams that worked in defense plants on the weekends. My grandmother took in laundry and did other domestic work, and raised six kids mostly on her own.

"I guess this was a poor neighborhood but we didn't think of it that way," my uncle mused as we drove. He pointed to the bulwarks of his community — Sacred Heart Church, and the rigorous Catholic schools he attended; the neighborhood newsstand — now gone — that took phone calls for my grandmother when she couldn't afford a telephone; the corner grocery — now a Chinese restaurant — where my uncle had gotten his first "job," delivering milk on his way to school in exchange for candy on his way home. At 14 he got his first real job, at Yankee Stadium, where concession jobs were controlled by the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Irish-American fraternal association. He traveled to a little office in Manhattan, mentioned an Irish buddy of his father's, and a clerk typed his name on a Teamsters card that let him sell Coca Cola and watch the Yankees all summer long.

My grandparents had other supports, too, like extended family. My father and his siblings lived with aunts and uncles for months at a time, when the burdens of raising six kids during the Depression became too much. At 12, my father was sent away for good, to join the Christian Brothers. Although he would remember that exile from his family with great sadness, there was no doubt it benefited him — us — materially. He and his two brothers who joined religious orders (for a time; all eventually left and married) got college educations and white collar jobs and left the South Bronx far behind.

But even my uncles who didn't go to college, on both sides of the family, joined the middle class, becoming cops and firemen and blue-collar union workers, the ladder of opportunity climbed by millions of sons of European immigrants in American cities. Unfortunately, many climbed that ladder and then tried to pull it up behind them, denying those jobs to the African-Americans and Latinos who followed them into those neighborhoods.

On this small scale, the story of one poor family in one poor neighborhood, the elements of a healthy community are clear. Extended family. Churches. Demanding schools. Small businesses. Ethnic associations. Networks for connecting people to jobs. Unions. There are sobering elements to the story, too: that my overburdened grandparents periodically had to send their children away; that it took a war to gainfully employ my immigrant grandfather, despite his years of hard work.

Today's community-building movement seeks to reckon with all the parts of that complicated up-from-poverty story: to strengthen families, churches, schools, small businesses, ethnic associations, employment networks and other community institutions, reweaving the social fabric in poor neighborhoods that once let poor urban families help one another and themselves. At the same time, community builders know these neighborhoods can't do it alone, and make the case for a national commitment to reconnect the urban poor to metropolitan regions that have excluded them, and a global economy that increasingly has had no use for them.

As the nation prepares to radically overhaul welfare, from a system that provides a check to one that conditions support on finding a job, the lessons of these community-building initiatives are vital. These are the people who have taken the time to get to know poor urban communities, to work on behalf of — and along side of — the low-income Americans who are mostly stereotypes to policymakers. They know that poor people want to work, they know that given jobs and support, they will work; they also know the barriers, both societal and self-imposed, to getting massive numbers of the urban poor permanently employed. That this movement continues to grow and thrive, tough as the work is, is cause for optimism, but we ignore its many complex learnings at our national peril.

• • •

I offer these biographical details because I've come to believe that in the community-building field, one's "point of view" is critically important. Community-building initiatives link a stunning range of people, across lines Americans rarely cross — race, class, ethnicity, geography, profession — and they require partners to be honest about what motivates their work. I do this work because I was raised to remember that I was one generation removed from the poverty of the South Bronx, and to feel a connection and a sense of responsibility to the people who came after us. So it's probably no accident that I think the highest value of community building lies in countering the isolation of the urban poor, reconnecting them with people who left poor neighborhoods, as well as those who never lived there but nonetheless bear responsibility for reversing their decline. My "point of view" is rather simple, but I hope not simplistic.

I also need to acknowledge that I'm not just an observer of the community-building scene. Since 1987 I have been a consultant to the Rockefeller Foundation and one of its flagship local projects, the Urban Strategies Council in Oakland, California, working to document the Council's efforts to combat persistent urban poverty. I have worked with the National Community Building Network, founded in 1993 to share the lessons of these new urban initiatives and influence public policy. I have benefited from the hard work and clear thinking of many dozens of community-building veterans, and their wisdom is reflected here. I approached this report with a sense that there was something to learn from the projects I wanted to profile, and that intuition was confirmed.

But I was also sobered by how hard this work is, and by the fact that none of the initiatives has yet reduced overall poverty in their target areas, though the best have reason to believe they are headed that way. I was left agreeing with what Ralph Smith, vice president of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, learned from his years with a community-building initiative in Baltimore: that "this work is possible, and crucial — and far more difficult than we talk like it is."

The report that follows is a respectful but not boosterish look at community building, that seeks to foster a conversation about why it is so difficult, and why it is crucial, too.

Joan Walsh

Frustration with government poverty programs found vivid expression in the dramatic 1996 welfare reform, which abolished the 60-year federal entitlement to aid for poor families. Yet even as the nation has grown more disillusioned by welfare, a vital new response to urban poverty has emerged in the last decade. Known as "community building," its goal is overhauling the nation's anti-poverty approach and creating communities that work for the low-income families who live there. At least 50 community-building initiatives have sprung up in American cities in the last 10 years. They're funded less by government than by national foundations, community funders and in some cities enlightened business leaders.

The crisis of urban poverty troubles most Americans. Polls show voters would spend more to help poor families if they knew their dollars would make a difference.[1] But a corrosive sense that "nothing works" poisons the debate about what to do. The trillion dollar apparatus set up to serve low-income families — welfare departments, job trainers, housing projects, youth programs, health clinics, special inner city school programs — is a jerry-built maze where failure has become too common and success too rare, despite hard work and good intentions.

What's different about community building? It rejects a programmatic approach to poverty, in favor of efforts that catalyze personal relationships and social networks to improve community life.

What's different about community building? It rejects a programmatic approach to poverty, in favor of efforts that catalyze personal relationships and social networks to improve community life. Community building initiatives are therefore diverse and locally tailored: In Denver, black churches have dramatically expanded their work with low-income families, thanks to an innovative partnership with local and national funders. In the South Bronx, five community development corporations have created an employment network to do whatever it takes — from resume writing to conflict resolution — to connect area residents to the mainstream labor market. In Savannah, Georgia, a high-powered collaborative is testing new ways to deliver services and engage residents in the city's poorest neighborhood. In Oakland, a local intermediary has infused community-building principles into the daily operations of schools, public agencies and neighborhood institutions.

The roster of community-building boosters is equally diverse. Former HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros was a believer, weaving community-building principles into new federal policy for public housing and economic development, especially the landmark $3.5 billion Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community initiative. Conservative author George Will visited Baltimore's Community Building in Partnership and came away a partisan, describing it as a model of Jeffersonian democracy.[2]

A 1995 report by the Committee for Economic Development, an influential corporate think tank, made a bottom line case for business to back community-building strategies to revive American cities.[3]

There's evidence that community building may be making a difference, especially in low-income African-American communities. Black teen birth rates are down 17 percent since 1991, an enormously encouraging sign, since half of all welfare recipients had babies as teens. Black infant mortality is down, more African-American youth are finishing school, and violent crime is down in most cities, too.

It's too soon to say with certainty that community building is responsible for those positive trends. But it is clear that this new generation of urban reform initiatives is having an important impact in many cities, in ways that have national implications. Community building is still just a seedling, pushing up through the cracks in widespread public cynicism about whether we can save our inner cities. But it tells us much about what it will take to reclaim poor neighborhoods from isolation and despair. This report will look at the lessons of mature community-building initiatives around the country and examine whether and how they can be shared with other cities.

The Importance of Relationships

Community building is complicated, in theory and practice. It analyzes urban poverty not simply as a lack of jobs or income, but as a web of interwoven problems — poor schooling, bad health, family troubles, racism, crime and unemployment — that can lock families out of opportunity, permanently. Thus one watchword of the field is "comprehensiveness": To reduce urban poverty, community builders believe, initiatives must untangle the knot of troubles that trap the urban poor today. Some projects — known as "comprehensive community initiatives" — tackle all those issues themselves in a given neighborhood; others may

address a single issue, like infant mortality, comprehensively — dealing with the employment, education, health and parenting issues that lead to high infant death rates in poor neighborhoods. Most initiatives fall somewhere in between. Community building is more of a framework for analysis and problem solving than a blueprint for urban action.

But if the agenda is complex, the crucial insight of the community-building field is simple, and powerful: Persistent urban poverty is not just about money, but also about relationships. Community builders recognize that the chronically poor today lack not just jobs or income, but positive relationships with people and institutions who can help them improve their lives. Community building grows out of the oft-expressed lament of an older generation, that "We were poor, but we didn't know we were poor." (This is not to be confused with "We were poor but happy," a notion that harks back to a mythical time when poor people endured their lot with quiet dignity, not noisy protest, and knew their place.) It expresses the sense that many poor people once were richer in social relationships — extended families, church networks, ethnic and neighborhood associations — that provided ladders of opportunity into the mainstream, and cared for those who dropped from those ladders and fell on hard times. What some analysts call "social capital" is nearly as scarce as financial capital in the most blighted urban communities today, and most initiatives pay attention to the social and even spiritual dimensions of inner city despair.

While community building is more an art than a science, research shows that relationships are key to turning lives around. Mentoring programs that link at-risk youth with caring adults, for instance, like the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program, have been proven to help young people avoid drugs and pregnancy and complete school.[4] Studies are beginning to show that low-income pregnant women have healthier babies if a network of friends and professionals support their efforts to eat well, get medical care and avoid drugs and alcohol.[5] And programs are finding that welfare mothers make an easier transition to work if they get help understanding work culture, managing child care conflicts and finding another job if they lose the first. Building on those insights to develop networks of social support in low-income neighborhoods cannot help but yield positive change.

Yet community builders know inner city neighborhoods cannot rebuild themselves alone, when race and class discrimination and decades of disinvestment have done so much to fray the social fabric of urban communities. Thus these new initiatives seek to build relationships between the poor and the powerful, to develop a sense of mutual obligation and reciprocity, a new social contract that keeps the urban poor from simply being the discards of a volatile, changing economy.

Community builders recognize there is no magic bullet to win the war on poverty. In fact, they reject the war metaphor. Where war is about destruction, community building is about creation. Its partisans have committed themselves to the difficult, long-term work of creating vital communities based on strong reciprocal relationships and thriving local institutions — churches, mosques and synagogues, civic organizations, small businesses, schools, ethnic associations, service providers — that enable low-income families and individuals to help themselves.

National Community Building Network

In 1993, community building projects funded by the Ford, Casey and Rockefeller Foundations came together with other urban initiatives to form the National Community Building Network, which now enjoys members from 40 organizations in 27 cities, from San Juan, Puerto Rico to Oakland, Calif. The network's hallmark is its diversity, and it models for the field the wide range of participants community building requires. It's a setting where business executives meet neighborhood activists, funders rub elbows with community organizers, theorists brainstorm with practitioners, and peers coach and learn from and support one another. Its members are committed to the following eight principles:

- **Integrate community development and human service strategies.** Traditional anti-poverty efforts have separated "bricks and mortar" projects from those that help families and develop human capital; each approach needs the other to be successful.
- **Forge partnerships through collaboration.** Building community requires work by all sectors — local residents, community based organizations, businesses, schools, religious institutions, health and social service agencies — in an atmosphere of trust, cooperation and respect. It takes time and committed work to make such collaboration more than rhetoric.
- **Build on community strengths.** Past efforts to improve urban life have too often addressed community deficits; our efforts build on local capacities and assets.
- **Start from local conditions.** There is no cookie-cutter approach to building community; the best efforts flow from and adapt to local realities.
- **Foster broad community participation.** Many urban programs have become professionalized and alienated from the people they serve; new programs and policies must be shaped by community residents.
- **Require racial equity.** Racism remains a barrier to a fair distribution of resources and opportunities in our society; our work promotes equity for all groups.
- **Value cultural strengths.** Our efforts promote the values and history of many cultural traditions and ethnic groups.
- **Support families and children.** Strong families are the cornerstone of strong communities; our efforts help families help themselves.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Legacy of the War on Poverty

The federal War on Poverty may have ended, but intellectual battles over its impact continue through today. There is a rich, contentious written history of that crusade, and we cannot do it justice here.[5] But several themes and lessons must be discussed briefly to understand the 1990s community-building movement. The 1960s era initiatives were inspired by an analysis of poverty, its causes and its effects that is still widely current:

- They too saw poverty as a web of interlocking problems — poor schooling, bad health, unemployment, juvenile delinquency, family troubles — and envisioned a solution in **comprehensive**, integrated services.
- They believed a key problem was the lack of **public participation** by poor people in the larger society, which gave them little say in the way schools and services were funded and administered. Thus many anti-poverty initiatives required "maximum feasible participation" by the poor in new programs, and in cities with a large black population, they dovetailed with the civil rights movement and promoted the political empowerment of African-Americans.
- They recognized that **new reform mechanisms** were needed to facilitate both program integration and increased public participation. Hence the creation of community action agencies to coordinate poverty programs, and ensure participation by the poor.

Overmatched, underfunded and hastily implemented, the War on Poverty of course failed to eradicate poverty. By the 1980s, more than a few influential observers were arguing that it might have made it worse. Former President Ronald Reagan provided the soundbite: "We fought a war on poverty," he liked to say, "and poverty won."

Writer Charles Murray supplied the theory in his 1984 book *Losing Ground*. Murray argued that expanding welfare programs had hurt the poor, by rewarding idleness and enabling illegitimacy, allowing fathers to abandon their children, who would be raised by mothers married to the welfare state.[6] Defenders of anti-poverty programs fought Murray with data, and they won the battle but lost that war too. By the mid-1980s a broad spectrum of Americans shared a nagging suspicion that we were indeed losing ground in our efforts to help the poor. Even liberals began to worry over a welfare-dependent "underclass."[7] It was this harsh political and intellectual climate that spawned the community-building movement.

Community builders conceded that the War on Poverty had failed to eradicate poverty, but not for the reasons Reagan and Murray offered. They saw three factors — economic, social and political — as key to why poverty resisted the 60s era approach. First, deindustrialization ripped the bottom rungs from the American opportunity ladder, consigning a larger portion of the workforce to low-wage jobs or unemployment. This happened just as zoning and other government policies encouraged the development of suburbs, draining people and investment from the inner city, where redlining drove out small businesses and would-be homeowners.

At the same time, the end of legal segregation meant the black middle class could leave run-down urban neighborhoods. The flight of the middle and working class concentrated the poor in isolated ghettoes — a second reason poverty worsened — where there were no longer jobs, good schools, businesses or services, or better-off neighbors who could aid or advocate for them.

Which led to a third key reason poverty programs didn't work, in the community-building analysis: because they're for poor people. No one else cares much about them, and the poor themselves, for many historical reasons, have rarely been able to marshal the resources to advocate with sufficient force to demand effective programs that provide opportunities for self-sufficiency.

Community-building initiatives thus try to address the economic, social and political marginalization that had locked the urban poor into poverty. The earliest projects began in the late 1980s, when several large national foundations launched comprehensive urban poverty initiatives. None were considered "community building" projects at the time. The Annie E. Casey Foundation launched its New Futures program, investing $50 million in five mid-sized cities to develop broad-based community collaboratives to craft service integration strategies.

In the same period, the Ford Foundation, which had heavily invested in community development approaches to poverty, began the Neighborhood and Family Initiative, to develop collaborative projects that linked human services and community development strategies. Around the same time the Rockefeller Foundation funded its six-city Community Planning and Action Program, to catalyze local research, planning, advocacy and action on urban poverty issues.

Several independent efforts began in the wake of those large foundation initiatives: New York's Comprehensive Community Revitalization Project (CCRP), a collaboration by 16 funders and businesses to use community development corporations to remake the South Bronx; President Jimmy Carter's Atlanta Project, which linked corporations, volunteers and community residents in an anti-poverty, community-building crusade; and Baltimore's Community Building in Partnership, an effort by city government, the Enterprise Foundation and community residents to rebuild the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood.

Despite their diverse origins, the projects spawned in this new wave of urban reform were clearly addressing

common problems and developing comparable strategies. They had much in common with the previous generation of anti-poverty crusaders — especially the emphasis on comprehensiveness, public participation and the need for new reform mechanisms described above. But they differed in several key ways, most notably by rejecting the notion that discrete "programs" were the answer to urban poverty, in favor of a longer-term approach that built community institutions, social networks and residents' self-reliance.

Community Building as Theory

Maybe the most important contribution of community building is the way it reconciles two ideological conflicts that have thwarted progress on poverty issues for at least two decades. The first split is over the causes of urban unemployment. Liberals have blamed urban poverty on deindustrialization, structural unemployment and racial and class discrimination, while conservatives emphasize family dysfunction and individual misbehavior. Put simply, one side argues that the problem is a lack of jobs; the other insists jobs exist, but poor people are unready or unwilling to take them.

Community builders know both are problems. It's no easy matter finding employment for large numbers of the urban poor. William Julius Wilson and others have documented well the toll that deindustrialization took on African Americans, who make up just one tenth of the American workforce, but are one third of the workers who lost manufacturing jobs since 1969. There's clearly a spatial and skills mismatch between existing jobs and the unemployed. Cities have become centers of finance and technology, mainly employing the college educated, while less skill-intensive service, retail and even manufacturing jobs have proliferated in the suburbs and beyond. Equally important is the lack of child care and health benefits for low-wage workers.

At the same time, poor education, social isolation and the self-destructive behaviors that result from those conditions have prevented many of the unemployed from finding and holding available jobs that could improve their lives. As the case studies make clear, the best community building projects try to reckon with both realities, by developing innovative, supportive pathways between the poor and existing job markets, along with strategies to create jobs and work opportunities where they are needed.

The second traditional split that community building tries to heal is the divide between people and place strategies. Especially since the 1960s, antipoverty work has often broken down between human services — the people people focused on the education, supply support and health care needs of the poor — and the "place" strategists, the community development field that focuses more on rebuilding neighborhoods — with housing, retail development and attempts at job creation — than on human capital.

The clash between these camps was most starkly drawn by writer Nicholas Lemann, a partisan of "people" strategies, in a 1994 critique of community development in *The New York Times Magazine*. Attacking the Clinton administration's Empowerment Zone project, Lemann argued that attempts to attract jobs to poor neighborhoods made no sense, since such areas had always been mere way stations for the poor to improve their lot and move on to a better life elsewhere. The goal of urban poverty policy, Lemann argued, should be to improve schools and services and help people get jobs that let them leave poor neighborhoods.

Community builders combine the array of "people" strategies Lemann backs with a pragmatic attention to "place," reasoning that poor people can't take advantage of even the best uplift programs if they live in dangerous neighborhoods, in crumbling housing, attending bad schools. They realize that most neighborhoods they work in will probably continue to be poor — the place where unemployed people, new immigrants, economic refugees from elsewhere in the United States, women leaving marriages, young people starting out, can find a foothold — and they offer an array of innovative "people" strategies to connect the urban poor to mainstream labor markets, rather than lobby for massive new industry in the inner city, or for enormous public jobs programs. But they also know "people" strategies can't work without some focus on place — or else blighted housing, bad schools and rampant crime will keep poor urban residents from bettering their lives.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

There are other noteworthy differences:

- The 1990s version of "maximum feasible participation" included corporate leaders and government bureaucrats along with low-income residents and welfare clients, to combat the social isolation of poor neighborhoods.
- The new initiatives pioneered what Northwestern University sociologist John McKnight terms "asset-based community development," an approach that builds on the strong institutions, associations and individuals that still exist in poor communities — from schools and churches to the corner grocer who employs teenagers, and the stay-at-home-mom who watches latchkey kids — rather than focusing solely on deficits like crime, unemployment or school failure.[1]
- Where welfare rights organizing dominated much anti-poverty activism in the 1960s, community builders have paid more attention to workforce strategies, believing that the current welfare system has helped isolate the poor from the mainstream.
- They have confounded traditional liberal/conservative divisions on urban issues. Community builders, for instance, share at least one tenet of the conservative critique of the War on Poverty: that it bureaucratized community-based anti-poverty efforts, and starved off some home-grown, effective solutions that used to exist in churches, settlement houses and community organizations.

Community Building in Practice: Lessons of Mature Projects

From visits to a dozen projects in recent years, it is clear that community builders are working on five major fronts in their efforts to reduce poverty and increase economic opportunity in their target area. While the best initiatives are making progress on most of these fronts, none of them has proceeded with equal success — or even equal commitment — on every front. So in examining initiatives with something to share, it seemed worthwhile to zero in on those that have the most to teach in one of these five areas:

- **Engaging the government systems** — from schools to welfare departments to health agencies to criminal justice — where billions of public dollars are currently trapped.

  Case study: Chatham-Savannah Youth Futures Authority

- **Building local institutions** that can provide needed services as well as play a role in reweaving the social fabric in their target community.

  Case study: The Comprehensive Community Revitalization Project in the South Bronx

- **Investing in outreach and organizing**, and other strategies for engaging and employing low-income community residents

  Case study: Baltimore's Community Building in Partnership

- **Involving the corporate sector** in their economic, social and political agenda.

  Case study: The Atlanta Project

- **Developing new structures** to facilitate activity on these many fronts — with government systems, neighborhood-level institutions, residents and business — and get the work done.

  Case study: Oakland's Urban Strategies Council

This section closes with four vignettes that show how community-building strategies built capacity in four local institutions: a public housing authority, a non-profit health pilot project, a black church network and a community foundation.

Part Two looks at lessons from the field, in those five issue areas. The Lessons section focuses on the five pillars of community building, what it takes to nurture a community-building agenda in any arena:

- Leadership
- Patience
- High but realistic expectations
- Community-wide capacity building
- Courage and candor about race

Finally, the conclusion discusses the unfinished business of community building.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

..."this work is possible, and crucial — and far more difficult than we talk like it is."

FIVE COMMUNITY BUILDING CASE STUDIES

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Savannah

The poorest neighborhood in Savannah, Georgia is a rectangular grid of landmark Victorians and falling down row houses known by its police department label, Area C. Unlike many low-income, high-crime neighborhoods around the country, Area C cannot be avoided by the city around it, since it lies between Savannah's central historic district and affluent residential neighborhoods to the south. Several of the city's main arteries run right through Area C, carrying tourists and commuters past teenagers standing idly on street corners, children playing in rundown playgrounds and an occasional open air drug bazaar.

In the heart of this neglected neighborhood sits what used to be St. Pius X High School. Built as the Catholic school for black children in segregated Savannah (the city's mayor, Floyd Adams, is an alumnus), it was abandoned when integration opened formerly white schools to African-Americans. St. Pius stood vacant for the better part of 20 years, until the Archdiocese donated it to the Chatham-Savannah Youth Futures Authority. Today it is a thriving family resource center, the heartbeat of Area C, and the foundation of a new approach to revitalizing low-income neighborhoods that Youth Futures pledges to spread throughout Savannah.

Day and night, the center pulses with activity. In a drug-abuse prevention program, middle school kids are studying the Nguzo Saba, African life principles to help them resist the lure of the streets, while next door the old school gym is being renovated to give them a positive alternative to the streets. Down the hall three rambunctious teenagers wait impatiently to talk to Janice Miller, the center's popular therapist. "They come to St. Pius for lots of reasons, and then they drop by and see me, so there's no stigma about getting 'counseling'," Miller says.

At the Kids' Cafe, volunteers are getting ready to serve more than 100 youngsters their daily hot meal. At the health clinic, young mothers tote chubby babies in for their immunizations, and a nurse sprints from an exam room down to the center's administrative offices to check on a pregnant patient's eligibility for Medicaid. Many of these workers are paid by different state and local agencies, but they have formed a team, working hard for the "consumers" they jointly serve (the word "clients" has been banished from the lexicon). "I took a paycut to come here," says family advocate Barry Jackson, who used to work for a state mental health agency. "This is the way we should be working with families."

St. Pius X Family Resource Center is one of the most tangible outcomes of Savannah's eight-year attempt to change the way public and private agencies work with families and children in poverty. Its innovative Youth Futures Authority (YFA), a collaborative of 23 public and private agency representatives and powerful business leaders, grew out of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's ambitious New Futures project, an attempt to integrate schools and social services for low-income families and children. New Futures officially ended in 1996, but Savannah's YFA lives on, working to develop effective homegrown solutions to the problems that blight its inner city neighborhoods.

City
Savannah, Georgia

Project
Chatham-Savannah Youth Futures Authority

Founded
1988

Key Partners
A 23-member public-private collaborative with major sponsorship from the Annie E. Casey Foundation

Focus
County-wide public systems, with an emphasis on Savannah's poorest neighborhood, Area C; target population 26,000

The patience is beginning to pay off. In 1996 Area C saw teen pregnancy, foster care placements and most violent juvenile crime fall significantly, indications that the community-building approach is beginning to make a difference. YFA provides a case study of what it takes to build relationships between people who just drive through poor neighborhoods and those who live there, to build a diverse, powerful constituency for community-building reforms.

From Service Integration to Community Building

Savannah is a gracious port city that is legendary for preferring courtesy to conflict going back to the Civil War, when its leaders turned the city over to General William Tecumseh Sherman rather than see it burned. It was labeled the South's "most desegregated city" by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. — the nation's first black Baptist church was founded in Savannah in 1791 — and the turbulence of the 1960s mostly passed it by. But so did some of the racial progress now evident elsewhere in the region. Savannah took until 1996 to elect its first black mayor — St. Pius alumnus Adams — and its black community is still

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

mainly clustered in declining neighborhoods like Area C, and is still disproportionately poor. Poverty, health troubles, school failure and crime intersect in such neighborhoods, and public systems were doing little to help. Concern about such problems — especially rising crime so close to the tourist district — galvanized the city to apply for the Casey project when invited.

"It was becoming clear that the problems causing crime — poverty and other social ills — couldn't be solved by the police alone," says former City Manager Arthur (Don) Mendonsa, an early leader of the New Futures effort. Fear of crime combined with alarm at widespread school failure to get the attention of key business leaders, who led the local effort to become a New Futures city. The city won $10 million from Casey over five years, which it matched with state and local funds, and set out on Casey's mandate to overhaul child and family services in Savannah.

It was an ambitious mandate. And while Casey Foundation President Doug Nelson still believes New Futures' agenda was correct, he admits it was premised on one false assumption. "We all assumed that somebody somewhere knew more of the answers to the questions about what a new comprehensive, community-based, integrated support system really looked like," he recalls. "And we were wrong."

YFA's Otis Johnson

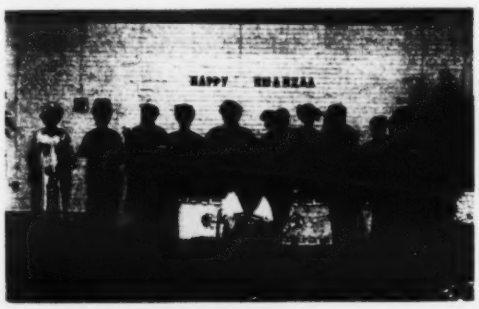
Savannah learned that lesson early on. "We realized we'd have to teach ourselves, and the community, how to collaborate and how to take risks," says YFA Director Otis Johnson. The ability of Savannah's YFA to forge ahead on its agenda, despite those uncertainties, to take risks and to correct its course repeatedly over its eight-year history is widely attributed to three assets — high-level support from business and government, skilled agency leadership, and the innovative use of data — from the police, schools, health and other agencies — in framing community problems and zeroing in on solutions.

Savannah's collaborative included top-level business, government and civic leaders — corporate chiefs, county commissioners, the schools superintendent, the heads of county health and service agencies, the United Way president and other leading non-profit groups — whose clout let the city win "authority" status for its collaborative from the state, giving it more power and flexibility than if it had simply incorporated as a non-profit group, as the other four New Futures cities did. YFA had the power to enter into multi-year contracts with public and private agencies, for instance, and to develop multiagency plans for new services.

The collaborative had the able leadership and daily management of Otis Johnson, a Savannah native, college professor, former city council member, and a well-respected veteran of anti-poverty and civil rights work going back to the 1960s, when he was deputy director of Savannah's Model Cities program. Equal parts scholar, diplomat and activist, the tall, courtly Johnson is the rare leader who can work well with corporate executives and low-income neighborhood residents, while managing a complex public agency that grew from four to 50 employees in just a few years. Many say he could have been Savannah's first black mayor.

Its third key asset was its skill with innovative data, which it used to win support from recalcitrant agency leaders and even, occasionally, from the Casey Foundation itself. Early on in the project, YFA had to reckon with the differences between Casey's vision and Savannah's reality. The foundation had envisioned New Futures creating interagency service projects focused on middle schools, with a goal of reducing teen pregnancy and dropout rates and improving school performance in those critical years. Within a year Savannah leaders realized they had to adjust their focus. Armed with strong data, they saw that many school problems cropped up in the elementary grades, making middle school too late to intervene if preventing problems was the goal. Casey's intended focus on the school system was also problematic. Resistance from Savannah school leaders forced the collaborative to develop strong partnerships with other youth-serving agencies and move at a slower pace with the school district, which went through three superintendents in a four-year period.

By 1991 Savannah's YFA had retooled, and was beginning to evolve from a service integration project into a community-building initiative, aimed at developing the capacity of both service providers and low-income residents to address the tangled web of problems trapping families in persistent poverty. First it had to pick a low-income neighborhood to pilot its new approach. The African-American Area C neighborhood is not the only needy area in Savannah. There are other distressed pockets of black poverty, and white poverty too. But again, YFA's skill at gathering and analyzing data was crucial, enabling it to show



Area C residents celebrate Kwanzaa

that Area C was where many problems were concentrated, from school failure to child abuse to infant mortality, allowing its diverse membership to agree to concentrate resources there. "Data has been critical to the establishment of strong, cross-agency relationships," says Gaye Smith, YFA deputy director.

Once the collaborative zeroed in on Area C, it made sure all efforts dealt with children in the context of their families, and families in the context of communities. It looked for innovative ways to build supports that enable neighbors to help one another, and families to help themselves. One was a Casey-funded "family to family" mentoring program, to match parents at risk of losing their kids to foster care with volunteer mentors who could help them cope better. Similarly, it recruited "resource mothers" for its federally funded Healthy Start project, to provide first time young mothers with experienced neighborhood volunteers who can support and teach them good parenting skills, the way an aunt or mother might. All programs strive to involve men, which is rare in a service system that tends to focus on women and children. In fact, St. Pius is remarkable for the high number of African-American men on staff, from its executive director and management information system supervisor, to family advocates and child care workers. "I look out for them, and I develop them when I find them," Johnson says simply. "It's real important in a community like this that doesn't have a lot of positive male role models."

Staff and consumers talk outside Healthy Start Office

And it has tried to make neighborhood residents full partners in its work. When it began planning the Family Resource Center, YFA formed a residents council to advise it on how to make the center more than just a satellite social service office. A key project is rebuilding the old gym adjacent to St. Pius, for basketball, senior programming and neighborhood social events. Five hundred residents turned out to dedicate the gym after the first stage of renovation.

"The Center belongs to the community, and someday the Advisory Council is going to run it," pledges Johnson, who has secured leadership and grants management training for the residents. "Everything we do is aimed at creating a civic infrastructure to let the community solve its own problems."

Reflections on Savannah's YFA

At the end of the five-year New Futures experiment, none of the target cities had met the project's original long-term goals: reducing teen pregnancy or improving school performance. Today Doug Nelson and others regret setting such high five-year goals, which even when the project began, experts said the cities were unlikely to reach. "Whether it was to try to persuade school boards or the media or the general public that this would translate into victories that could be measured, we engaged in a tacit conspiracy to set for ourselves quick, measurable wins for large groups of kids," he admits. "And we created an albatross of expectations that made our jobs more difficult than they needed to be."

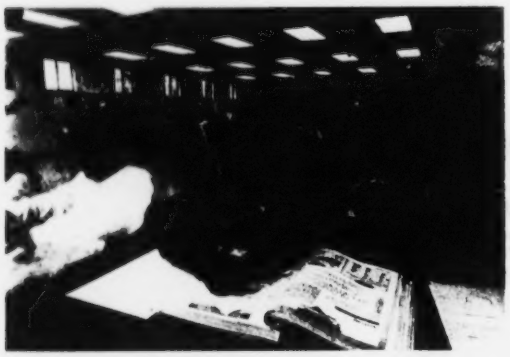
But eight years into the project, improvement is finally evident in Savannah. Black infant mortality has dropped by nearly 45 percent since 1992, and the number of births to black teens has dropped 12 percent. Foster care placements are down almost 25 percent over the last two years. Focus on the early years is paying off in school indicators, as suspensions and retentions for elementary school youth have declined steadily since 1992. There's less violent juvenile crime, though arrests are up for simple battery, the formal charge for fighting — "a sign we're not dealing with the kids' anger," Otis Johnson says.

YFA has certainly broadened the constituency for change in Savannah. The remarkable diversity of its membership means that an unusual cross section of Savannah leaders has developed first-hand understanding of the real-life costs of poverty and exclusion. YFA Chairman Jim Piette, the retired CEO of Union Camp paper mill, talks movingly of the young people and their advocates he's encountered struggling to make life better in Area C. "It's been a real learning experience for our business members. In a business meeting you can say, 'I know you were on the agenda but we really have to deal with these sales figures today.' In the community you have to care about process, about hearing from everyone. You have to develop a forum that everyone feels they can use."

YFA leadership is determinedly non-partisan. When Savannah's new Republican Congressman Jack Kingston was in the district, Otis Johnson took him on a tour of St. Pius, and later heard him praise the program in a Congressional speech on C-SPAN. "We take Republicans and Democrats, the old and the young, the black and the white, everyone who wants to make a difference," says Mayor Floyd Adams, a YFA supporter.

As to Casey's original, system-change goals, YFA has clearly fostered collaboration and new models of governance. The city and county matched Casey's $10 million dollar investment, giving YFA a flexible pool of funding

with which to innovate. It has yet to become a mechanism for agencies to routinely blend the bulk of their budgets, but that may come in time, as the state of Georgia recently chose YFA to experiment with a new, block-grant approach to poverty funding.



YFA serves clients of all ages

But even if they're not routinely sharing funding yet, several agencies have adopted YFA's decentralized, neighborhood-based approach. City government is also striving to decentralize services and focus on community building. It recently acquired a school site which it plans to turn into the city's second Family Resource Center, with YFA's help. And YFA coordinates an enviable array of federal, state, county, city and private foundation youth and family initiatives, with the power to design and locate them to have maximum impact on the community. "All roads lead to the YFA in Savannah," says Jeff Griems of Public/Private Ventures, which is funding its Community Change for Youth Development through YFA.

And finally, after a rocky beginning, YFA has developed a productive relationship with the school district, staffing an effort to develop interagency resource teams, of health and social service workers, parents and community-based agency staff and based in schools. Such teams, Otis Johnson recalls, were intended to be the centerpiece of New Futures, but they were impossible to get off the ground without years of developing trust, relationships and a common understanding of community problems and agency cultures. "It took us eight years, but these teams are finally ready, and they're going to change the way agencies and schools do business," Johnson says.

YFA's biggest contribution to Savannah may be the leadership it exerts on race and poverty issues. "The single most important component of YFA has been developing leadership with vision and understanding," says City Manager Michael Brown. Casey found leadership — particularly multi-racial leadership — crucial to why Savannah stood out among New Futures cities.

"The combination of a well-respected businessman as chair...with an activist executive director who was viewed as a spokesperson for the black community, plus a committed city manager who understood the public system of services was a compelling force in the local landscape," Casey concluded.[12] Remarkably, the same active leadership core has stayed with YFA from its inception, and stays committed to its community-building agenda.

With the formal end of the New Futures initiative, Savannah's YFA moved into a fourth phase of work in 1996: planning a community development initiative to tackle the economic and physical needs of Area C, while continuing to work on the service reform and school improvement agenda. YFA has made little progress to date on linking Area C residents to jobs, but in the next phase employment issues will move higher on its agenda.

Johnson intends to gradually spin off the direct services YFA is providing, from Healthy Start to the Family Resource Center, to other nonprofit providers, and return the authority to its origins as an intermediary organization. "It was necessary to do services because we needed to create new models from scratch," Johnson says. "But we want to avoid turf issues; being seen as just another provider."

YFA's expanded community-building agenda has raised a so-far productive tension in the collaborative, which bears examining because it is common to the field. Some members worry that broad community-building activities won't be sufficiently strategic and targeted to have an impact on the serious problems in Area C. Don Mendonsa is frank about this concern. "There are some people who see St. Pius as just a neighborhood center and community-building effort. But I think we need really targeted interventions that focus on achieving measurable reductions in teen pregnancy and school failure. I worry that a broader effort won't bring any reduction in those troubles. And if we don't do something to demonstrate we can make a real difference, we're going to lose support." Otis Johnson shares Mendonsa's concern, but notes: "We can't just be about deficit-model social services. Community building means we listen to what the community wants, because they're the ones who ultimately have to get organized to solve these problems."

Lessons of Savannah's YFA

Strong, multiracial leadership, a high-powered, broad-based collaborative and innovative use of data helped YFA develop political will for change.

Its public authority status gave YFA the political clout and financial flexibility to blend funds and plan across program areas.

Candor about race, made possible by its multiracial leadership, enabled YFA to zero in on the city's neediest African-American community.

Its community-building philosophy let YFA focus on building neighborhood institutions that foster personal relationships, more than starting programs.

New York City

Charlotte Street in the South Bronx represents ground zero in the destruction of inner city America that went largely unchecked from the 1950s through the early 1980s. It is where candidate Jimmy Carter stood, against a backdrop of burned out buildings, rubble-strewn vacant lots and other symptoms of disinvestment and despair, to illustrate the failure of urban policy under Republican presidents Nixon and Ford. Four years later Ronald Reagan stood in the same spot to show that a Democrat in the White House had not revived Charlotte Street either. From 1970 to 1980, the population of this South Bronx neighborhood, Crotona Park West, dropped 75 percent, as residents fled the advancing tide of arson and crime.

But today Charlotte Street is the site of 89 tidy, single-family homes ringed by white picket fences, a surreal, almost kitschy rejoinder to those who gave up on that corner of the city years ago. Developed by the Mid-Bronx Desperadoes (MBD), a gutsy community development corporation that has built $215 million worth of local housing in the last 20 years, Charlotte Street's American Dream development is only a small, if stark, symbol of the comeback of the South Bronx.

Housing is just part of the story. Starting in the mid-1980s New York City, backed by state and federal agencies, rebuilt much South Bronx housing stock, in partnership with community groups like MBD, as a partial solution to the homeless crisis. More than 22,000 housing units were newly built or rehabilitated, and 70 percent of the construction was sponsored by local non-profit groups. But they quickly learned that building housing was not the same as building community. Without jobs, health care, stores, parks or playgrounds, these were still grim, barren neighborhoods, inhabited by a lot of formerly homeless families with multiple troubles — a recipe for a rerun of the despair and devastation that blighted the area a generation before.

Enter the Comprehensive Community Revitalization Project (CCRP), an initiative by the Surdna Foundation and 16 other funders and corporations to invest in the capacity of existing Bronx organizations to develop a community-building approach to those challenges. At a time when funders and practitioners have debated the best way in to the arena of comprehensive urban reform, CCRP was a bold vote on behalf of community development corporations (CDCs) as the ablest lead agencies to work comprehensively. CCRP picked five South Bronx CDCs to invest in -- Phipps, Promesa, MBD, Mount Hope Housing and Mid-Bronx Senior Citizens Council. Four years in, all five have developed primary health-care centers, added on Head Start and day-care programs, put case managers in schools to work with at-risk kids and developed a range of other programming, from men's groups to English as a Second Language classes.

Some achievements are vivid. In the West Farms neighborhood, a state-of-the-art job training center stands where a liquor store used to be, thanks to a collaboration between Phipps and MBD CDCs, while across a busy intersection, a new Beacon school — a late day, night and weekend community center housing a range of programs — serves 1,100 children and their families. New playgrounds and community gardens dot the urban landscape now, while parents patrol streets around their children's schools with walkie-talkies, to create safe corridors where kids can walk without fear of violence. With a $6.7 million investment to date, CCRP has leveraged more than $35 million in public and private funding for the neighborhood, and created 300 new jobs.

Recently CCRP mounted its most ambitious challenge: an employment service, to link unemployed and welfare-dependent Bronx residents with the labor market. Its approach is a departure for the field. Where CDCs have traditionally emphasized job-creation in local small businesses — which CCRP has done as well — its employment service will focus the CDCs on linking unemployed residents to existing jobs throughout the city. If it works, it will demonstrate how the principles of community building — developing the human bonds that foster mutual support in low-income neighborhoods — can be used to link isolated inner city residents to mainstream employment.

CITY
New York City, New York

PROJECT
Comprehensive Community Revitalization Project

FOUNDED
1992

KEY PARTNERS
Five local community development corporations and the Surdna Foundation, with backing from 15 other funders

FOCUS
Five South Bronx neighborhoods; target population 150,000

FORGING STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

The hub of CCRP is Anita Miller, a veteran of urban reform going back to Model Cities. With long stays at the

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Ford Foundation and the Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC), a stint as one of Jimmy Carter's appointees to run the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, and a founder of Neighborhood Housing Services, she's seen everything and done almost as much in the community development field.

With CCRP's flexible cash Miller is a savvy investor with an eye for social entrepreneurs. She describes how she decided to put money into Mid-Bronx Senior Citizen's Council's (MBSCC) catering business. "Here they were already delivering 250 Meals on Wheels a day. We knew they could build on that capacity. They said, 'Let's make it a business enterprise.' We thought they should be able to create jobs — and turn a buck."

MBSCC developed a market among non-profit programs that were eligible for USDA funding to provide meals, along with their existing social services. CCRP support helped start the meals program; last summer they catered 4,000 meals a day and they project revenues to grow at 10 percent annually. The catering business employs 33 people in peak periods. In a paper on CCRP, Mitchell Sviridoff and William Ryan compare Miller to a "venture capitalist," whose expertise and coaching support has often been as crucial as the funding she provides.[1]

But if Miller is the hub, she relied on strong partners who were ready to make the most of what CCRP could offer. MBSCC Executive Director Jeannette Puryear, active in Bronx improvement efforts going back to the 1970s, knew Miller at LISC in those days and was anxious for the chance at partnership. "Anita came to us when she was first planning CCRP, asking what we thought our communities needed. As an organization we were moving toward comprehensive-

Mid-Bronx Senior Citizen's Council catering enterprise

Electrical job training

ness already. But CCRP helped us incredibly, with its multi-year funding, its technical assistance, and by giving us time to plan and implement our plans." Eight CDCs applied to be part of CCRP; Miller and CCRP's funders chose six. One, Banana Kelly, left the program in 1994.

From her office at the Surdna Foundation, Miller serves as coach, strategist, traffic cop and trouble shooter for the five CDCs, helping them sort through opportunities individually and collectively. CCRP also funds a management information systems expert, a site manager for each CDC and an outreach worker to develop community involvement. And all five CDCs have the backing of three "dedicated staff" members from well-respected local agencies, experts whose time CCRP has purchased for technical assistance on self-sufficiency, neighborhood safety and open space development.

The CCRP also provides seed money to get new opportunities off the ground. When the Board of Education agreed to open new adult education classes in the South Bronx, for instance, but could not fund textbooks and other instructional materials, CCRP paid for them. "It was a small check but what mattered was that I could write it immediately," Miller says. Some checks were larger: CCRP provided $150,000 in predevelopment funding so MBD could build a new shopping center anchored by a Pathmark supermarket, leveraging more than $4 million in public and private investment.

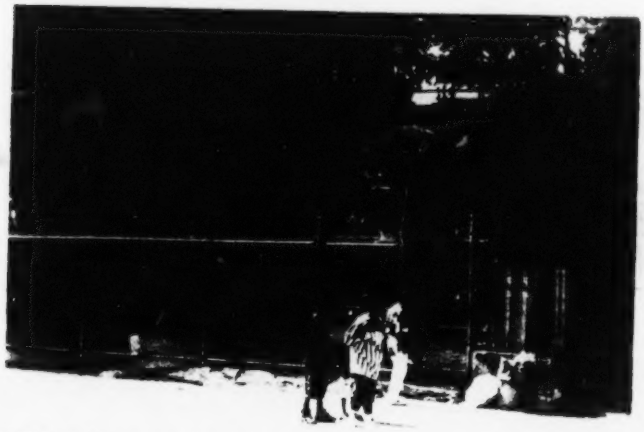
But since the beginning, jobs have topped the CCRP agenda. "We told Anita: People in our neighborhoods want jobs," says MBD Executive Director Ralph Porter. Says Ricki Granetz, CCRP's consultant on self-sufficiency: "It took us a while to work out what it would look like, but the employment service could really be a model for the field."

Overcoming barriers to self-sufficiency

Think of the five CDCs as mid-sized neighborhood businesses — together they employ almost 700 people, most from the South Bronx — and you have a window onto one key advantage enjoyed by CCRP's employment service: Its staff is realistic about the barriers to getting clients employed. They've hired 300 people for CCRP

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

programming alone in the last three years — in jobs ranging from nursing to child care to building maintenance — with mixed results. "Some of the community people we hired had problems on the job, with punctuality, with taking direction or criticism, with being rude," admits Cynthia Lowe-Briggs, the first CCRP manager at Mt. Hope



MBD neighborhood of the South Bronx

Housing Corporation. "So we're able to anticipate what the problems may be with other employers."

The five CDCs started their employment efforts in 1993 by contracting with top flight job training and placement programs and referring clients there. But many people they referred did not show up for training, while many who did had educational or life barriers that kept them from employment. Even those who got jobs were hard put to keep them: the first child care crisis or fight with a spouse or clash with a supervisor, and many were on the street again. "Few programs really have time for the hand holding people need to make the transition to employment, and that's what CCRP offers," says Barbara Zerzan of the Federal Employment Guidance Service (FEGS), a respected employment training program, who succeeded Ricki Granetz in working with CCRP.

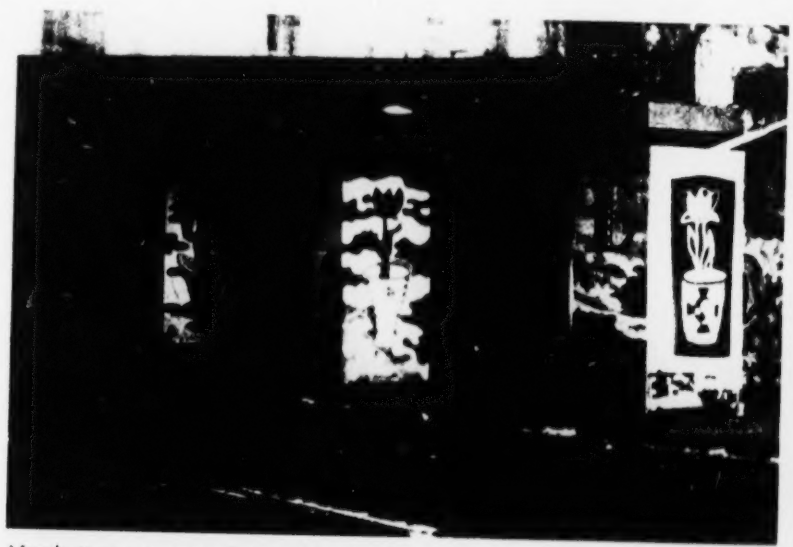
The project derived much insight from Chicago's Project Match welfare-to-work experiment, which found many women held two or three jobs before they were able to become steadily employed. CCRP sites do what it takes to get and keep clients employed — and if they lose a job, to get them back out looking for another one.

At Mount Hope, workshops for residents have addressed domestic violence and health troubles; MBD started a men's group to help men help one another seek employment. "I'm a family man, but I used to have a problem with drugs," says Phil Mills. "The men's club was there to help me get my life together and talk about what's really going on." Thanks to his involvement with the men's club Mills got a building superintendent job through MBD, earning $20,000 a year, plus benefits.

At full operation, the employment service will offer a three-pronged approach to job placement at all five CDCs. Each will feature a job resource center, where residents can drop by to look at want ads and job listings, use a computer and fax machine, as well as get support from staff and peers around their job search. They will all provide week-long job workshops, where residents will learn interviewing skills, résumé production and talk about work culture. The third component is a job network, that will link the five CDCs in developing and seeking out job opportunities for neighborhood residents.

At MBD's Job Resource Center, more than 100 residents dropped by in the first weeks, before the Center even began its outreach. In three months, the Center placed 33 residents in jobs. To the staff's surprise, most of the jobseekers were men, even though MBD's tenant base is overwhelmingly single mothers with children. The walls are papered with job advertisements. At a corner table several men pore over *The New York Times* want ads, while an employment counselor runs a job readiness workshop with four young women, conducting a mock interview to teach etiquette and communications skills.

The CCRP Service will stay engaged with clients and employers even after jobs are attained, since many new workers lose their first jobs through misunderstandings



Murals at an entrance to Bronx subway station

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Bronx youth helping to improve her surroundings

about employer expectations and work culture. Counselors check in with the employer and employee weekly for the first 12 weeks, and monthly for the rest of the year. At Mt. Hope, Cynthia Lowe-Briggs tells the story of a motivated client who got an excellent job with the post office but was fired because of a misunderstanding with her supervisor. "We were able to get the supervisor on the phone and get her another chance at the job," Lowe-Briggs recalls, while counseling the woman about how to handle future on-the-job conflict.

Reflections on CCRP

It should be clear from the last 30 years of urban reform efforts that innovative three-to-five year foundation initiatives and federal demonstration projects, however inspired, will not solve the long-term problems of low-income neighborhoods. What is missing in most communities is a mechanism for continued investment in savvy, long-lasting institutions to attack these problems themselves. CCRP represents the recognition that long-term change requires "strong local organizations — with staying power, planning, learning and management capacity," in the words of Sviridoff and Ryan. CCRP will clearly leave the CDCs stronger than it found them, in staff capacity, management information systems, and expanded program expertise, and a talent for the collaborative relationships they have developed with one another.

Of course there are limits to the CCRP model. While the project has done much to leverage additional public dollars with CCRP investments, it has yet to sustain an engagement with the large public systems — welfare, foster care, juvenile probation — that currently spend billions of dollars, often unwisely, in their target neighborhoods. There have been some system impacts, Miller says: CCRP's model for Head Start expansion — which added an employment counselor and is training salaried Head Start employees to care for children in their homes — is getting attention from regional Head Start officials. "We've tried to be about demonstrating how to do things differently, and hoping the systems can learn from that," Miller says. "But it's incremental — which is how I think systems change occurs."

CCRP has unapologetically favored product over process -- starting the wheels turning for health centers, a joint venture with Pathmark, early on, then following with an extended community planning process (for which it won an award by the American Planning Association.) "I've seen so many initiatives get bogged down in endless planning processes that create nothing and leave residents frustrated," Miller says. "The field needs to be about 'planning while doing' -- working on the things the community desperately needs while developing community input and oversight as you go along."

Lessons of CCRP case study

Its capacity-building strategy helped neighborhood institutions combine people and place approaches.

Savvy, experienced leadership, at CCRP and in the CDCs, helped the organizations select projects they could succeed with.

Its focus on employment helped CCRP sort through opportunities and set priorities for new activities.

Experienced community-based institutions are critical in developing the personal bonds and range of social supports that will enable the long-time unemployed to enter the labor market.

..."long-term change requires strong local organizations — with staying power, planning, learning and management capacity, ..."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Atlanta

"Let me tell you what it's like, being a corporate executive going to work for a community-building effort. You've been on this big cruise ship — the corporation — with an incredible support system, and then they put you out to sea in a little dinghy, attached to the ship by a rope. And they let the line out, little by little, until you can't see the ship any more. Then one day you tug on the line and there's nobody at the other end. You feel a sense of abandonment. It's scary.

"But it's also been a heck of a lot of fun."

Nick Snider, executive vice president at United Parcel Service, jumped into his dinghy in 1992 as a corporate adviser with The Atlanta Project (TAP), President Jimmy Carter's ambitious five-year initiative to bring corporate leaders, volunteers and community residents together around an antipoverty, community-building urban agenda. TAP's goal was uniting the "two Atlantas" Carter and others observed, to mobilize the resources of this thriving Southern city — "the city too busy to hate" — to meet the needs of its poorer, mostly African-American neighbors. Five years after it began, TAP, as planned, has scaled its efforts back, closing its 20 neighborhood offices, known as clusters, and moving into what it calls "Phase II," a leaner project with a narrower scope.

But the neighborhood office Snider advised — the Therrell Cluster, based at Therrell High School — will stay in business, running a family resource center, thanks to a committed partnership between United Parcel Service and neighborhood residents inspired by TAP. The success of Snider's Therrell Cluster shows the promise in TAP, underscores why it struggled along the way, and offers a wealth of lessons for corporate leaders and community builders who want to team up to solve urban problems.

CITY
Atlanta, Georgia

PROJECT
The Atlanta Project

FOUNDED
1991

KEY PARTNERS
President Jimmy Carter, local and national corporations, local and national foundations

FOCUS
Three counties in metropolitan Atlanta, divided into 20 regions, known as "clusters", with a target population of 500,000

"SUCCESS CAME DOWN TO INDIVIDUALS"

TAP began in 1991 with a visionary, far-reaching agenda, as befits the brainchild of a former president. It placed offices in 20 Atlanta "clusters," and based them in high schools. It recruited corporate partners for the clusters, hired local staff, and let them loose on the neighborhoods in one of the most ambitious urban change experiments of the last 20 years. Its goals were huge: systems change, collaboration, citizen participation and empowerment, and corporate partnership.

But if TAP was long on ambition, it was short on a tailored strategy to topple the formidable obstacles to achieving its goals. High on that list was the issue of race. Although President Carter continues to be widely respected in Atlanta's black community, TAP suffered from the perception that it was the pet project of elite white do-gooders, who neglected to build relationships with black partners before they set off to help poor black people. It focused on involving white-led corporate partners, for instance, mostly neglecting Atlanta's thriving black business community, and alienated many by failing to involve Atlanta's black clergy.

"TAP told us in 1991 they thought the black churches were not together," Rev. Timothy McDonald, former head of Concerned Black Clergy, told the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. "Our reaction was, 'It's your game. Go play it.' Two years later they came to us and tried to organize. It was too late then."[14]

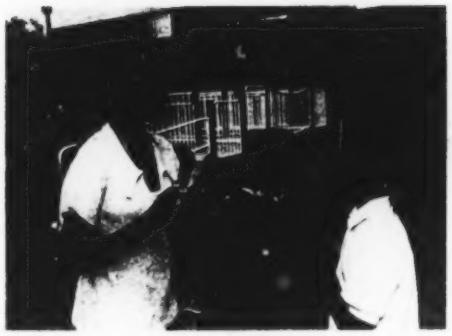
TAP also struggled to find the right balance of power between downtown direction and neighborhood self-determination. TAP's mandate to its clusters was intentionally sketchy. Since the goal was community "empowerment," TAP's central office tried not to dictate cluster activities. There were a few planned TAP-wide initiatives — an immunization campaign that mobilized volunteers and reached 16,000 babies; an anti-violence crusade, TAP into Peace, that sent volunteers door to door getting signatures on a pledge to end urban violence.

Central TAP staff also worked on a few key systems change measures, scoring a major success by developing the Georgia Common Access Form, a single application for a range of public programs. It catalyzed a new housing resource center and an Entrepreneurial Development Loan Fund. The centerpiece of TAP's downtown office was a futuristic "collaboration center," where state-of-the-art computer technology allowed community groups and TAP partners to meet and discuss issues and strategy via computer, facilitating community-based planning and collaboration.

But at the cluster level, work was driven by neighborhood residents. Thus its goals and quality were predictably

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

uneven. Most clusters were heavy on pleasant but limited-impact activities like health fairs and cultural celebrations, but a few took bold strides. Where corporate partnerships were successful, results were impressive. They ranged from Therrell's Family Resource Center to an effort by a bank executive to train residents for temporary bank jobs. One cluster started a community development corporation, another a business incubator, and a third a program to help residents obtain commercial drivers licenses.



Former President Jimmy Carter remains actively involved in The Atlanta Project

Although TAP galvanized impressive activism around the city, a 1995 evaluation by Emory University Professor Micheal Giles found overall mixed results. Service providers and other community-based agencies complained they hadn't been consulted adequately before project start-up, and they remained critical of TAP as it grew, Giles found. Cluster initiatives were uneven, and most "did not address the goals of the project in a systemic and long-term manner."[15] President Carter's optimism galvanized an initial burst of activism, but resident involvement in TAP fell off significantly from that encouraging start.

But TAP's strength, Giles found, was its corporate partners program: "The recruitment of the corporate partners has been a major success for TAP." In a frank conversation almost a year after the report, Giles added another finding: "Where TAP succeeded, it came down to individuals — which is anathema to a social scientist," the scholar admitted wryly.

Strategy, experience with racial tension, and hard work

The Therrell Cluster bears out Giles' finding that success in TAP came down to individuals — namely, Nick Snider, cluster coordinator and social services veteran Helen Catron, associate coordinator Eric Flowers, a Therrell High graduate, and a team of area residents who got behind them. The cluster leaders' frank appraisal of TAP's successes and failures points to four necessary qualifications for staffing community-building efforts: strategic thinking, life experience, a readiness to confront racial tension and hard work.

"First of all, Nick and I were clear that TAP would not last forever, so we had to be strategic about leaving something behind in this cluster," recalls Catron, an elegant, no-nonsense advocate who ran Head Start programs in Chicago under Mayor Richard Daley. "We went out and really listened to people in our cluster, and what we heard was, 'You can't come in and do like projects always do: start something up and then leave,'" Catron recalls.

Although TAP based its clusters at high schools, the project offered little direction about whether or how to involve the school in change plans. The result was predictably problematic in many high schools, where TAP staff had little relationship with school leaders.

By contrast, Catron and Snider approached Therrell High School strategically, as an asset TAP could build on to begin its work. Science teacher Adrienne Doanes, who chaired the cluster's education committee, recalls their collaborative approach: "Usually people come into schools and say, 'This is what we're gonna do.' Nick and Helen didn't do that. They acted like guests in our home. They said, 'How can *we* help *you*?' "

Local UPS executives meet with community residents

SW Atlanta has a wide variety of housing

Snider and Catron had a comparable sales job to do with the broader community. Although "the two Atlantas" TAP talked about sometimes seemed shorthand for divisions between blacks and whites, there are actually two *black* Atlantas, one prosperous, one poor, and they both are part of the Therrell cluster. This southwest neighborhood, home to former Mayor Andrew Young, boasts million dollar mansions and grim, dangerous housing projects, both inhabited by African-Americans. Class divisions in the cluster were almost as troublesome as race. "Many people didn't want there to even *be* a TAP cluster here," Catron recalls. "TAP was for poor people." But Catron, Snider and Flowers tapped into residents' desire to improve education for everyone — even though affluent black families tended to sent their kids to private schools or public magnet schools on the north side — and zeroed in on improving Therrell High as a cluster priority.

Eric Flowers, Therrell Cluster

Still, Snider and Catron were up against deep cynicism, among teachers and community residents, about change efforts like TAP. They were burdened by TAP's high profile origins and even higher expectations. News accounts made much of President Carter's involvement, and TAP's $32 million budget — $14 million of which represented in-kind corporate donations, from computers and furniture to the salaries of loaned executives. The remaining $18 million was still a significant sum of money, but spread over 20 clusters and a downtown office in a five year period, it didn't go as far as people hoped. "Oh, I never would have put that $32 million in the paper," Catron laments. "It made our job so much harder. People came in and expected us to write a check."

What they did instead was go to work. Snider set up his office in the high school — most corporate partners worked there only part-time — and spent five days a week there, sometimes working Saturday too. "I started out doing it part time and then went to my company and said 'I have to do this full time.' They thought I needed a check-up from the neck up, to leave UPS entirely," Snider jokes. "But I felt like I couldn't serve two masters."

He and Catron joined the school management team and helped assess what the new principal needed to boost Therrell's achievement. They concluded the school couldn't do it alone — there was a need for community mentors, for tutors, for health care, after school programs, teen pregnancy and violence prevention. UPS sponsored scholarships for a team of tutors from Morris Brown College, a historically black college that was Therrell's university "partner." Later Morehouse students joined the mix. From early cluster meetings Catron gleaned a team of community volunteers. "I wanted people who would do the work, and I went out and got them," she says.

And when Eric Flowers — by then a West Point graduate and Desert Storm veteran — showed up one day volunteering to start a Therrell alumni mentoring program, Catron and Snider grabbed him to be assistant cluster coordinator, with a focus on youth anti-violence work. "He epitomizes what you'd hope to find in a community like this," says Snider. "He could have written his own ticket, worked anyplace, and he wanted to give back here."

As in other clusters, race was a problem, as corporate partner Snider, who is white, had to deal with residents' doubts about his motives for working in an almost exclusively black neighborhood. "How did Nick deal with it? Well, he just rolled up his sleeves and went to work, harder than anyone could believe," says Catron, who is African-American. "He went to all the meetings. He listened, he didn't just talk. He was never condescending. When we did the immunization campaign, he was the last to leave. And even folks who didn't like him had to be inspired. One man told us, 'I'm not gonna have a white man working harder than me'."

Snider took the hazing in stride. "You know, I understood it. These folks have seen so many carpetbaggers come in, so many programs come down the pike. People are looking for you to demonstrate your concern by example, by hard work, by being there consistently. I just dealt with it that way."

As word came from the central office that TAP would wind down, as planned, in 1996, Snider, Catron and Flowers looked for a way to institutionalize their work with Therrell. It was clear their school support efforts needed to be anchored somewhere, and they came upon the idea of a family resource center — called "The Family Tree" —

that would co-locate needed student and family services and also provide cultural and recreation activities. They visited models like St. Pius Family Resource Center in Savannah, and the Beacon Community Schools in New York City. Casey and UPS jointly pledged a half million dollars and the Carter Center is committed to raising another half-million. The cluster formed its own nonprofit organization in early 1996.

It's clear TAP created something in Therrell where nothing existed before. Students and teachers come by the project office just to visit with Flowers, Catron and Gene Jackson, a UPS executive who succeeded Snider at Therrell. Catron handed over the reins to Flowers in mid-1996, and believes he, Jackson and Adrienne Doanes will take the project into its next phase ably.

TAP volunteers in the neighborhoods

Flowers talks passionately about the need to improve Therrell High. "My empathy for these students is so strong. They're not getting what they deserve. I did really well here: I got a full scholarship to West Point. But when I got there I realized as hard as I'd worked I didn't get the education my classmates had gotten. I really struggled." Already working to build bridges to local black clergy, Flowers is confident TAP left behind a strong organization in Therrell Cluster.

Helen Catron and Nick Snider agree, but they're respectfully blunt in their assessment of what TAP did wrong as it tried to catalyze community change in 20 diverse neighborhoods.

"I'm very proud that we're leaving something behind in this cluster, but I'm a little sad that so few of the other clusters can say that," Catron says. "I think we made a mistake in not providing better training for cluster coordinators in how to build a community organization — in leadership, management, strategic planning, community engagement. And I also want to say: These problems are not solvable in five years. I don't know if that was a realistic time frame for TAP. We didn't do all President Carter wanted, but look how far along we are on this journey."

Snider echoes Catron, but he also thinks TAP was bedeviled by the challenge of "comprehensiveness" — the sense that community-building initiatives must work on the full spectrum of issues, from housing to health to education to economic development, to be effective. "The central office had eight different issue areas they wanted us to work on. We had a task force on everything, and we were always running downtown to meetings on this or that. It took a lot of time.

"But I don't think people should hang their heads, now that the clusters are closed. If Therrell succeeded, that's a success for everyone in TAP. There were other successes too. You developed unprecedented relationships of trust with corporate advisers in 20 clusters. Nobody knew how to do this work when we began. The idea of creating opportunities for businessmen and women to get out of their offices and solve urban problems was incredible. I happen to think this is a great project."

Reflections on The Atlanta Project

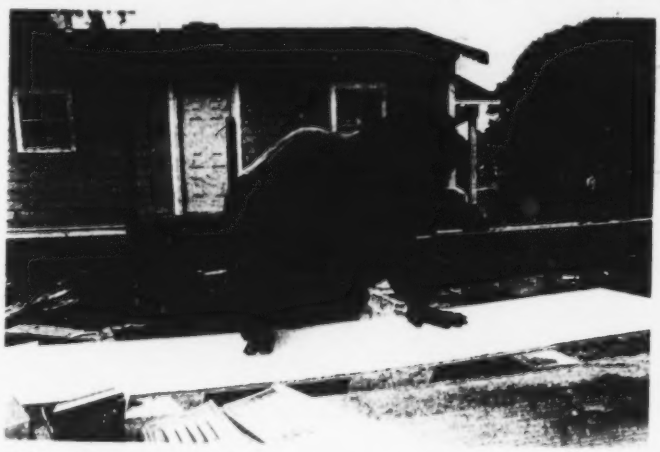
Whatever its flaws, honesty seems to be a TAP hallmark, because TAP Executive Director Jane Smith readily agrees with most of Catron and Snider's criticism. "Let me tell you, Helen and Nick and Eric were simply our good luck, and all the success of Therrell goes back to them and their community steering committee. It's true, we didn't always provide coordinators with the right training. Frankly, we defined the job wrong and often we hired the wrong people. We went after activists when we should have hired managers, people with a history like Helen's of doing work and knowing how to make change in a community. So we've learned a lot about our strengths and weaknesses in these five years." Of 20 clusters, eight took root, Smith estimates, catalyzing part-

nerships and activities that will persist after TAP moves into Phase II.

But she defends TAP's decision to close down cluster offices. "I think it's clear it's not time for TAP to go, we're not finished with our work. But we also don't want to be working in 20 neighborhoods the rest of our lives. With hindsight, I think we should have spent our first five years developing an institutional home for the cluster offices, so more of them could have continued the way Therrell has. Helen's right: Five years wasn't enough time to develop solid organizations in 20 neighborhoods. But now we're going to concentrate on what we do well: focus on children, youth and families. Develop corporate partnerships. Be a catalyst for collaboration."

With its ambitious goals and high-profile leadership, TAP started out ahead of the community-building curve, without much history and experience to draw upon. Thanks to President Carter's efforts promoting its message of urban hope, TAP is probably the nation's most famous community-building project, so its successes and struggles have taken place under a magnifying glass wielded by scores of academics, journalists and practitioners. In 1995 the Carter Center began The America Project, to begin to distill TAP's learnings and convene other cities to share the lessons of community building nationally. Its leaders are thoughtful about TAP's lessons.

Most, but not all, TAP leaders would start smaller, believing it was too ambitious to start in 20 neighborhoods. "I would have picked five," sighs Smith, who joined TAP midstream in 1993. They would provide more intensive training for leaders, staff and volunteers. "Building community organizations in low-income neighborhoods requires a change agent," says evaluator Micheal Giles. "Finding and training such change agents is a more time-consuming task than TAP realized up front."



Habitat for Humanity construction

TAP leaders now know they should have planned for the inevitable culture clashes that emerged between corporate executives and community residents. "I don't think we did enough to help people handle their very different expectations," says Elise Eplan, a TAP veteran who now works for The America Project. "The communities were told this was about their 'empowerment.' The corporate folks expected to be welcomed with open arms. But sometimes the communities told the corporate folks: 'We don't need you -- just give us your money and we can solve our own problems,' while the corporate leaders felt they were there to help. And they were pretty much left to deal with that on their own in the clusters."

Local business people tour the cluster

Jane Smith thinks TAP needed better mechanisms for working with corporate advisers. "Nick puts it well. The corporate folks were attached to their employer by a long rope, and often there was nobody holding on to the other end. And TAP wasn't responsible for supervising the corporate advisers, so some were left to sink or swim." And few corporate partners zeroed in on what ought to be a crucial role for business in community building: helping to link residents with jobs and catalyze other economic development opportunities in poor neighborhoods.

Finally, TAP needed better strategies to deal with race. "You've really got to talk openly about race from the beginning, and we didn't," says Eplan, a white native of Atlanta. "It's not enough to build an organization with a racially mixed group of people. When you have poor people who are predominantly African-American and corporate leaders who are predominantly white, you're going to have a dilemma. Racial differences can fester, and certainly they did here."

TAP staff went through diversity training in mid-1993, and most participants thought it helped some. Eplan believes TAP needed an ongoing process to help partici-

pants talk about race from the project's inception. Smith agrees, but adds "The Atlanta Project encompassed such enormous diversity — corporate people, academics, service providers and residents — that the tensions weren't just racial. Even some of the black corporate folks had a hard time working with black community folks. No one anticipated all of that when we began."

Within the Therrell cluster, Snider and Catron developed their own strategies for coping with race and culture. "People cried racism about Nick and we just faced it as a team," recalls Helen Catron. "I worked in Minnesota for a while so I know what it feels like to be the only one in a room with your particular skin color. People called him racist — which he wasn't — because he wouldn't just write a check and leave. So we kept going out to the community and facing it together. And that, plus his hard work, eventually brought people around."

"Here's what I tell community people," says Snider, "Corporate America today is still white, middle-aged, gray-haired and overweight, and it's going to be that way for a while. So if you're going to work with the corporate sector, realize that demographic reality up front and don't be offensive. When I go into your community I don't try to offend you. I'm respectful. I'm not asking you to kiss anybody's behind, but respect your corporate partners if you're going to do this work. You're going to have to teach, they're going to have to learn, and vice versa. Helen and I had to learn to trust each other when we started our salt and pepper act, and it took some time. But what we did in the Therrell Cluster is what this work is supposed to be about, and I'm incredibly proud of it."

Many Atlanta-area businesses pitched in to help TAP

Immunization walk through

Lessons of the Atlanta Project

High level, respected leadership was a key project asset, but its top-down origins were a hindrance in gaining community buy-in.

The best clusters were led by experienced leaders and managers, who knew how to build on assets and involve community residents from the outset.

Corporate partnerships required much more time, patience and cultural sensitivity than businesses or TAP originally anticipated.

Involving business in community building won't necessarily lead to expanded work opportunities for residents without planning and up-front agreements.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Baltimore

Baltimore's Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood is wired, the old-fashioned way, with people connecting to people: block captains, neighborhood watch volunteers and a team of 100 "outreach advocates" paid to link their neighbors with prenatal care, parenting classes, high blood pressure screening; to survey them about their health care, their job training needs, their children's school experience. On any given day in this enclave of 10,000 people, someone is going door to door checking on their neighbors. "Every once in a while somebody might say, 'Go away — y'all were just here the other day," admits Norman Yancey, a family advocate who's probably knocked on every door in Sandtown himself over the last few years. "But mostly," Yancey adds, "people are still real glad to see us."

Six years ago Sandtown was the capital of infant mortality in Baltimore, the city's most dangerous neighborhood, with the lowest-achieving schools and the highest unemployment rate. That's when a unique partnership between the City of Baltimore, the Enterprise Foundation and community residents came together to turn things around. Enterprise and the city were embarking on two major affordable housing projects in Sandtown — the city was renovating a rundown public housing project while Enterprise was building the 227-unit Nehemiah homes — but residents were complaining that new housing couldn't stem the tide of violence, disinvestment and despair. Mayor Kurt Schmoke agreed, and with crusading Enterprise founder James Rouse, set out on a crusade to help the community imagine a thriving Sandtown, with good schools, safe streets, shops, services and links to the mainstream economy — and renovated housing, too.

Today, Sandtown is still a struggling low-income neighborhood, with more than its share of Baltimore's problems. But the vision of a rebuilt community is starting to become reality. Violent crime is down 20 percent since 1992, and a comprehensive federally funded initiative has lowered infant mortality by 20 percent. Nearly 250 residents have been employed in Community Building in Partnership (CBP) community improvement activities, and another 500 have received jobs through CBP-related job-placement efforts — a significant impact in a neighborhood of 10,000.

More than 1,600 homes have been built or renovated, and work recently began on a marketplace that could become the commercial anchor of this once thriving African-American community, where Thurgood Marshall attended school and Cab Calloway, legend has it, was born. A "New Schools Compact" will give the community unprecedented say about curriculum, hiring and budgeting in Sandtown elementary schools — issue areas that directly affect what goes on in the classroom, a sanctuary that even targeted, high powered school reform efforts rarely reach.

Yet the Sandtown-Winchester experiment lost some momentum several years into its social change agenda. Tenacity and strong leadership accounted for its revival and progress to date, but much uncompleted business remains. The initiative has struggled with structural questions since its founding in 1990, and the death of its chief visionary, James Rouse, in April 1996 has left a leadership void partners must address.

City
Baltimore, Maryland

Project
Community Building in Partnership (CBP)

Founded
1990

Key Partners
Mayor Kurt Schmoke, Enterprise Foundation founder James Rouse, community leaders, local and national foundations

Focus
The Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood, population 10,000

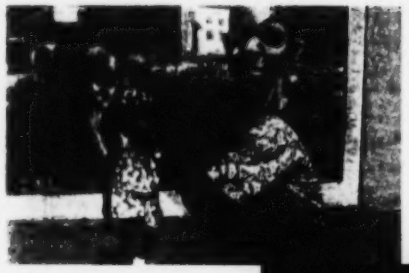
For all the inspiring activity it has catalyzed, Sandtown-Winchester has yet to reach the critical mass that would achieve "neighborhood transformation," the initiative's goal, rather than program-specific reform. "Sandtown convinced me more than ever that this work is possible, and crucial — and far more difficult than we talk like it is," says Casey Foundation Vice President Ralph Smith, a consultant to CBP in its early stages.

Whether and how the initiative completes its mandate will teach the field a lot about what neighborhood transformation really requires.

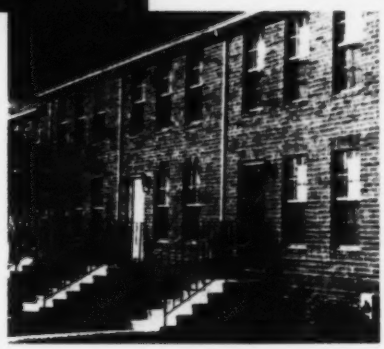
Sandtown's Assets

The eye of the storm of change in Sandtown is Community Building in Partnership (CBP), the umbrella for the public-private community alliance that has worked to transform this neighborhood. In its first phase, planning exercises drew hundreds of people. Participants tried to take an asset approach to the neighborhood — to recognize the power of the 57 church congregations contained in Sandtown's 72 square blocks, for instance; to see vacant lots as potential community gardens, boarded-up homes as a housing resource for homeless or doubled-up families; the high number of Medicaid-eligible women and children as a market for health care providers.

Planning was a time-consuming process, occurring in two phases over three years. There was no instruction



Norman Yancey with Sandtown youth



Sandtown-Winchester homes

manual for how to pull together the incredible mix of people the initiative was intended to reach — how to really involve low-income neighborhood residents, for instance, rather than rely on service providers or political leaders as proxies. Developer Jim Rouse pushed participants to think big, and they did, coming up with an inch-thick planning book laying out what they wanted in Sandtown in the areas of housing, education, public safety, employment, health care and more.[16]

They set impressive — and probably impossible — five year goals for the effort: to cut the unemployment rate in half, to 11 percent; to make sure 95 percent of Sandtown youth meet state education standards; to build or improve 3,000 units of housing, to reduce crime to the level of a middle class neighborhood. And at Rouse's encouragement, the plans were not constrained by lack of resources.

But post-planning letdown set in when residents realized how little funding was available to implement their lofty vision. The initiative's first tangible accomplishments were vivid and inspiring — a renovated community center; the kickoff of Baltimore Healthy Start, an ambitious infant health program; completion of the Nehemiah Homes. Other early achievements were encouraging, but comparatively small: community gardens, a local newspaper, holiday celebrations.

Outreach advocates had worked during planning to inform residents about the transformation effort and get them involved in meetings and task forces. But once the work of fundraising and implementation began, public participation dropped off, and cynicism began to grow back where space had been cleared for hope.

A snapshot of Sandtown in 1994 and 1995 might have captured a community in disappointment, wrestling with how hard it is to make neighborhood transformation a reality. At the worst point, flyers were circulated in the neighborhood depicting Rouse as a plantation owner profiting off black people. "Jim was very hurt, but to his credit, he didn't run," says Ralph Smith. "He went back into the community and said, OK, I want to know what the problem is here."

The problems were many. "There was a lot of frustration with raised expectations," says Pat Costigan, former director of neighborhood transformation at the Enterprise Foundation. "When we started, nobody else had moved from planning to operations the way we were trying to. We didn't have enough resources to solve the big problems, we didn't have community capacity yet, so we couldn't sustain the momentum of the early phase of transformation."

The initiative was particularly burdened by the tension between its commitment to community participation and the need to produce real change. "You'd have a public agency come in and say, 'We'll give you money if you write a plan in 60 days,'" says Smith. "Well, very few communities have the capacity to fast track proposals like that *and* make sure there's community participation. So at times it felt like consultants took over the process."

And like Atlanta, Sandtown had to grapple with the downside of high-profile sponsorship, in this case the role of Jim Rouse and Mayor Kurt Schmoke. Sandtown is unique among community-building initiatives for having the high-powered, hands-on involvement of a popular mayor, but that partnership brought its own problems. Schmoke was understandably anxious to monitor the activity of this high-risk effort that had his name on it, and the project occasionally got tangled in local politics. When Schmoke wound up appointing all the members of CBP's board, after some community members thought they'd won a promise that some slots would be selected by the community, many residents came to see CBP as top-down business as usual.

Maybe most challenging, says Ralph Smith, in an effort devoted to systems change, "You had three partners — the community, the new mayor and Jim Rouse — who didn't trust bureaucracy. For good reason: The community hadn't been well served by the public systems. Mayor Schmoke was inheriting the bureaucracy of his predecessor, and Jim Rouse had been fighting bureaucrats all his life." So relationships with public agencies were occasionally uneasy — especially when modestly paid civil servants whose departments were suffering cutbacks watched CBP staff up with well-paid consultants.

Smith was an advocate for trying to win over harried, skeptical bureaucrats. "Jim's vision was bold and compelling but its one flaw was that he wanted to privatize everything, get programs out of the hands of the bureaucracy, but he couldn't. He needed a strategy for engaging with the public systems and at first he didn't have one.

All his life he'd built big developments where political forces had coalesced to push things through, because there was money to be made. Here there was no political force to do that. Gradually he grew to see he needed to be much more supportive of meaningful public participation and working through bureaucracy — that those were the only ways to get through the obstacles to transformation."

So Rouse worked harder, walking the streets of Sandtown once again, attending public meetings and belatedly but sincerely trying to develop partnerships with public agencies. Meanwhile, behind-the-scenes relationships had been developed by Enterprise staff and others that were finally beginning to pay off. A health care consortium came together uniting public and private providers to execute a compact guaranteeing health care for all Sandtown residents. Its first project was the opening of three school-based clinics in early 1996. A neighborhood development center was created to assemble financing and cut red tape for the 16 nonprofit and for-profit developers now engaged in renovating the "Sandtown 600" homes.

And in the schools, a new "core knowledge" curriculum partly designed by parents is too new to have affected test scores, but students already are voting with their feet. Absenteeism is down at all three schools, most notably at George Kelson Elementary. "I used to drive through Sandtown and see these tiny children walking away from the school in the morning," recalls Kim Griffin, an Enterprise Foundation staffer who grew up in Baltimore and was involved in the Sandtown experiment since its startup. "Now they're happy to be in the classroom, because real learning is going on."

Indeed, a visitor to Kelson can recognize a school that's turned around. In its brightly lit, well-decorated classrooms, the fun of learning is infectious. CBP's education director Sylvia Peters strolls into Kelson classrooms unannounced, and tries to manage the pandemonium unleashed by her arrival. In every class several students jump up for a hug, and the teachers too seem to bask in her optimism and praise. "These are such *smart* children," she says everywhere she goes.

A veteran of Chicago public schools who went to work for the Edison Project, the controversial for-profit school system envisioned by entrepreneur Chris Whittle, Peters is the engine of this current phase of Sandtown school improvement. How did CBP gain entrée to classrooms and curriculum decisions? "It doesn't help to blame the schools, tell them 'you're deficient,'" says Peters. "They've done the best they can alone. We came in to be their partners."

CBP was already working with Healthy Start, to provide comprehensive health, education and social services to poor children from infancy through age 3. It then raised funds for a HIPPY program (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters), to help parents whose children are not in preschool to get them ready for kindergarten. HIPPY is now enrolling 80 youngsters. It pushed for full-day kindergarten, and catalyzed the school-based health clinics that opened in 1996. "Instead of blaming schools, we're saying we'll get these kids to them ready to learn," says Ronica Houston, CBP director.

Peters then zeroed in on the need for new curriculum, and settled on a "core knowledge" curriculum developed by cultural literacy guru E. D. Hirsch. CBP assembled a "summer institute" for educators to tailor the curriculum for African-American Sandtown students, and participants included 12 parents who were paid stipends for their work. When funds ran out before the project was through, Peters went out and hustled more to keep the parents engaged. Her personal secretary is a formerly unemployed mother who volunteered in the effort.

The curriculum was put in place in September 1995. Now, under an innovative compact between the school district, the city and CBP that governs Sandtown schools, partners are trying to develop a community governance structure that will eventually have control of budget and hiring issues. The progress has not come without conflict. But the schools themselves increasingly welcome CBP's help. "We did home visits to deal with attendance problems, we did home visits to boost immunization," says advocate Norman Yancey. "Whatever they need help with we're ready to provide." When the school began again in September 1996, no student was denied admission because of missing immunizations; just one year before, 38 percent of Sandtown students began school late because of immunization problems.

Reflections on Sandtown-Winchester

Walk the streets alone, a stranger, and Sandtown might seem much like any other low-income neighborhood, with too many adults still hanging idly on street corners. Walk the streets with Norman Yancey, and it's clear the people on the corners are his neighbors. They greet him warmly, and he talks about them the same way. "I've been there. I was a crack cocaine addict for nine years. I was a substance abuser from the time I was 11 until I was 30." He went into drug treatment five years ago, and then got a part-time job at

an emergency family assistance program where he impressed supervisors with his easy rapport with youth. He became a full-time outreach advocate with CBP in 1991.

What's made the most difference to Yancey about CBP? Maybe surprisingly, he talks about his relationship with the late Jim Rouse. "He really cared about me as an individual, he wanted to know me, and that was powerful. It taught me I have to care that much about the people I work with in the community. He could have just written a check to this program, but he didn't — he was on the streets of Sandtown all the time, and that touched me." Yancey delivered a eulogy for his friend at Rouse's memorial service.

It's clear CBP has been most successful where its collaborating partners are strongest. The most obvious example is in housing, where the Enterprise Foundation has years of experience in Baltimore and around the country. Not surprisingly, housing improvement and development has been the easiest goal to make progress on. Likewise, Sandtown's strong Healthy Start program and an award-winning Habitat for Humanity office, based out of New Song Community Church, have made huge strides on their agendas. New Song also runs a school, from preschool through eighth grade; a health clinic, and a job development effort along with Habitat's signature sweat-equity housing program, which has turned 35 Sandtown residents into homeowners and employed dozens of students from CBP's Youthbuild program on its housing sites. More than any other community building site, it emphasized employing neighborhood residents and creating jobs. Baltimore Healthy Start hired 30 of its 80 outreach workers from Project Independence, an innovative welfare-to-work experiment. "People thought that was very risky, but we showed it could be done," says Daisy Morris, head of Baltimore's Healthy Start.

But the overlapping mandates and missions of its partners make it hard to untangle the web of relationships that are improving Sandtown. If you ask for a CBP "tour" of Sandtown's change efforts, for instance, you'll be sent to Healthy Start, New Song Community Church and its Habitat for Humanity program. The interconnections make it hard to analyze cause and effect or apportion credit. But CBP's partners seem bewildered at the attempt to do that. "We've had a partnership with Enterprise and the city from the very beginning, and it's been critical to us," Morris says. "We turn to them for help with housing; right now we're trying to integrate our case management and outreach services with CBP's. We're all part of a larger whole, and that's the way to go."

Where existing service providers have been less strong, CBP can take credit for building local capacity, but success has been longer in coming, and the effort has led to organizational and funding challenges. CBP oversees 110 different community initiatives with 70 different funding sources, and the organizational headaches continue to mount. So far it created and spun off a non-profit health consortium that's collaborating on universal access. It's working to create a new nonprofit for its education efforts, and then spin that off, too. For the time being it will continue to run a family advocacy and support program and several youth-serving efforts. But the goal is to eventually spin off all of the services and become a catalyst and convener of Sandtown improvement activities, providing "facilitative leadership" in the words of Mayor Schmoke — and no programming. The structure questions are crucial, because it's only by managing and planning the complex web of services and reform efforts that CBP creates synergy, becoming more than the sum of its parts, leading to neighborhood transformation.

But it seems fitting that CBP sends visitors to see Healthy Start and Habitat for Humanity, because these partners symbolize public and private sector community building at its best. CBP hasn't let government off the hook — and Healthy Start's success shows what wise government can do. But it also recognizes that community building requires not just public programs and services, but private, independent institutions that minister to the social, emotional and spiritual needs of residents.

This lesson comes to life back at New Song Community Church, where leaders are wrapping up a tour by showing visitors their music program and children's choir. Suddenly music director Greg Boone recognizes Norman Yancey, with whom he used to play drums back in high school. Yancey has given up his music, along with so much else about his old life, but Boone coaxes him to come back and visit, maybe take up his music again at New Song. "I'm going to follow up on that," Yancey says, smiling as he walks away. In Sandtown, there's even someone to reach out to the outreach workers, and that's the foundation of powerful change.

Lessons of Sandtown-Winchester

The high-powered leadership of Jim Rouse and Kurt Schmoke raised community spirits and garnered critical outside resources.

Paying community residents to do outreach and organizing yielded double returns, serving to increase community participation while giving advocates needed income and work experience.

The lack of a strong organizational structure early on, especially given the other demands on Schmoke and Rouse, caused day to day management and leadership headaches.

Building the capacity of local partners has been the key to CBP's success -- but where it has had trouble building capacity, success remains elusive.

Oakland

Angela Glover Blackwell was a public interest lawyer who regularly sued public agencies on behalf of low-income clients, when one day she had a disquieting epiphany. "I saw that most of these agency people were basically good people who wanted to do the right thing for their clients, but they truly didn't know how."

She began to ponder a career change. What if a local organization devoted the formidable research and advocacy skills that typically go into lawsuits, into helping public agencies better serve low-income communities? What if isolated bureaucrats found themselves sitting at a table with service providers, business people, advocates and neighborhood residents, trying to craft new solutions to the problems of urban poverty that they clearly couldn't solve alone? In 1987, Blackwell formed the Urban Strategies Council in Oakland, California, to broaden the circle of concern and expertise on poverty issues, and reorient the city's fragmented service systems toward a community-building agenda.

From its very first meeting to kick off its very first initiative — a blueprint for expanding Oakland's early childhood programs — it was clear the Urban Strategies Council was about a whole new way of doing community business. Around a crowded conference table Council staff had assembled a contentious working group of providers, from family day care homes to school district programs, federal Head Start and local information and referral agencies. Some in the group had never met before and didn't consider themselves part of the same professional world. Others had a long productive history together; still others were unfriendly rivals after years of clashing on issues. And none of them knew this upstart group that had ventured on to their turf.

The volatile diversity of the working group might have seemed the result of the Council's newcomer naivete, but it was intentional. Council leadership knew and ignored divisions in the group, judging that progress on early childhood issues would require this full range of players to set aside differences and work together for the good of the children they jointly served.

And they did. The group worked together, supervising the Council's data collection, research, writing and recommendations. They spent more time quarreling with staff than with each other, since the Council had no history on these issues and needed to be educated. But that was part of the plan, too: that an intermediary group staffed by hard-working, thick-skinned generalists could tackle a wide range of complex issues — from early childhood to welfare reform to teen pregnancy to economic development, the scope required by "comprehensiveness" — and create a public space where bureaucrats and service providers would sit down with clients and community activists to develop a plan for change.

The Council didn't intend to stop with a plan that then gathered dust on a shelf; it intended to go on to implement those plans: raising resources, staffing an ongoing change process, and cajoling bureaucrats and teachers and funders and social workers — whomever needed cajoling — into acting on its recommendations for change.

CITY
Oakland, California

PROJECT
Urban Strategies Council

FOUNDED
1987

KEY PARTNERS:
Local and national funders, and a board of civic, religious and business leaders and residents

FOCUS:
Persistently poor children and families in Oakland's high-poverty neighborhoods

The early childhood project had developed both an issues agenda and a working style that would carry the Council along on a fast-paced current of activity for the next several years. The Council set out to implement the recommendations of the early childhood report, working to improve child care options for welfare families; planning a comprehensive birth-to-school program in a local housing project; staffing a collaborative to provide school-based support, including child care, for teen mothers, and maybe most important, salvaging the school district's subsidized early childhood programs, which were under threat of closure by the state for cost overruns and quality problems. Working on implementation set the Council apart from traditional planning and advocacy groups, which tended to study problems but do little about them, and its access to resources, through its links with foundations, also boosted its local credibility.

And through all of those efforts the Council began to hone the functions of a locally based intermediary: high-quality data, convening, staffing change, capacity-building, fundraising, project assessment. It pioneered new ways of bringing low-income residents into the process, with focus groups, community meetings, working groups, and structured interviews. Oakland Mayor Elihu Harris began to publicly joke that the Council deserved an honorary degree in engineering, "for all the bridges it has built in the community" — a vivid definition of the role of a locally based intermediary.

With each success, the Council's agenda got wider and the stakes got higher. Community leaders and funders began to see the resource they had in the Council, and to approach it with new tasks. Would it staff and help lead a citizens commission to reform the public schools? The Council agreed, and co-founded the Commission for Positive Change in the Oakland Public Schools, which crafted a community-driven education reform plan that a new superintendent endorsed and built on.

Could it help staff the city's planning process to become a federal empowerment zone? Council Vice President Henry Izumizaki took the lead, and raised funds to pay and supervise a team of 60 community residents to interview their neighbors to find out the most pressing needs of the target areas. After the application was complete — HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros called it a model for the nation — the Council raised more money so the interviewers could form "community-building teams," to do organizing and outreach in their neighborhoods. When the federal government awarded Oakland "Enhanced Enterprise Zone" status instead — resulting in $25 million in grants, loans and in-kind support, instead of $100 million — the Council and its local allies worked to make expanded community-building teams a core of the new zone activity. They also pushed to develop a resident-driven community board to review economic development proposals.

It would be hard to pick one "best" from the list of the Council's achievements, but probably its highest-impact work has been in the systems reform arena. In 1993 it founded and staffed the Alameda County Leadership/Technical Team, a body of high level deputy leaders from Oakland schools and the county's health, social services and probation departments, along with representatives from the business and nonprofit sectors. The Team bolstered the county's own internal reform efforts,

providing staff and leaders committed to breaking down barriers to interagency collaboration, and maybe more important, to rebuilding neighborhoods, not just servicing clients. County elected officials and agency executives embraced the agenda and funded an Interagency Children's Policy Council to work it from inside the county.

Today, with welfare reform and block granting on the national screen, Alameda County has already begun to innovate, contracting with community-based agencies to meet the diverse needs of very troubled families, focusing on getting welfare clients ready for work, and zeroing in on two low-income neighborhoods, one in West Oakland, to craft a community-building approach to service provision. Today it may be farthest along with its systems change agenda of all of California's large urban counties.

Not all of this reform can be attributed to the Council, of course, but even skeptics credit the Council with dramatically changing the way the city and county think about and work on poverty issues. "I think they've begun to move from a service mode to a capacity-building mode, to realize they have to help people in neighborhoods develop their own set of solutions," says Council President Maria Campbell Casey. "And frankly, none of us know exactly how to do that yet."

How did this low-profile group, in the span of just a few years, gain the credibility to sit at the table with school superintendents, agency heads and political leaders, to become a leading voice on these issues? The Council likes to say it wasn't about any one component of its method, and that the strength of an intermediary lies in providing "people, place and a point of view" in the service of a community-building agenda.

Certainly the "people" the Council attracted were key to its success. Blackwell was a lawyer working on civil rights and poverty issues. Casey had been a teacher, a

community advocate and directed a successful welfare-to-work job training program. Its first research director, Ed Church, had a history of innovative work on perinatal care issues. All had worked on poverty issues, but had stayed outside the traditional anti-poverty systems. At one time there were no fewer than six lawyers on staff — including current Executive Director Gregory Hodge — bringing their skills in advocacy, analysis and argument to the wide range of issues the Council takes on. There were also teachers, journalists and university professors — what one observer called "talented generalists" who could move from issue to issue with comfort and flexibility.

Commission for Positive Change

"Place" has been important, too. The Council set up shop in an office complex of to-be-renovated Victorians in downtown Oakland. It's a welcoming place, a well-kept house with bright sunny rooms and plenty of meeting space, where the community has gotten used to attending productive meetings that attract a stunning diversity of people, across lines of race, class, ethnicity, geography and profession.

And finally, the Council has been served well by its clear "point of view:" Its highest priority is the persistently poor -- not just children, not even just poor children, but those at risk of a lifetime of poverty, locked out of opportunity by family troubles, poor schooling, bad health, unemployment and racism, the dense web of problems that comprehensive initiatives address. And it addresses them with an agenda that's about community building, not just social services, with its focus on relationships. "An LBI is really about creating a new kind of civic leadership focused on changing systems, race relations and building community," says Casey, who also heads the National Community Building Support Center, founded in 1996 to provide coaching and technical assistance to intermediaries fostering community building around the country.

Reflections on the Urban Strategies Council

The Council has also had to grapple, in maturity, with the tensions inherent in an intermediary approach. Its clearest successes came where the constituency for its reform effort was obvious and it could hand off its work to another agency or public body to finish the job. Its work saving the school district's early childhood programs, or staffing the county's early systems reform efforts, are examples of this synergy. But in all of its projects, the Council had to face the barriers to outsiders with good ideas significantly reshaping large public bureaucracies. Its early forays were accepted warmly because the Council came to its work with a commitment to service. But after that relationship building, when actual differences over reform strategies and priorities surfaced, the Council was sometimes limited in its ability to push through them, especially without a well-organized, vocal community constituency for the reforms it advocated. The Council pioneered new forms of community participation — the Commission for Positive Change, the empowerment zone interviewers, community-building teams — but it never ventured into the realm of community organizing.

That tension is intrinsic to intermediaries. It is hard for a consensus builder to also be a community organizer. And there are other built-in tensions: between being a facilitator — which requires maintaining strong working relationships with government agencies and providers — and being an advocate for poor families, a role that if pushed too hard, could threaten the collegial working relationships an intermediary must maintain. And while intermediaries like the Council can help communities ease the fragmentation of service programs and work toward comprehensiveness, they must struggle to avoid mirroring that same fragmentation in their own work. Individual Council staff members found themselves developing their own community relationships and areas of expertise that made it a challenge to share strategies internally.

And the importance of relationships in managing such tensions and contradictions means that changes in leadership and staff can be destabilizing. The departure of founder Blackwell caused transition woes no one fully anticipated. The Council had expanded dramatically in a few short years, and it was also beginning to work nationally, through the National Community Building Support Center. With few models for such a wide scope of work, the group was challenged in maturity to develop an organizational structure that would integrate the diverse talent Blackwell had assembled and synthesize the sometimes fragmented components of its work, without Blackwell serving as the hub of the organization.

Months into the transition the Council began an organizational development process to grapple with the structural issues, and the group has since moved to more solid ground. "I feel like our own transition helped us understand what it takes to do this work — that our organizational issues were really issues for the field," says Maria Casey. "We're striving to develop multi-centered leadership in the organization now, for example, and I think that's what this work requires in most communities."

The Council has moved into a new phase with its recent work on youth development. Launched in 1994, the initiative ran smack into the Council's leadership transition, and the community partners the Council had convened began to move forward without the full participation of the Council. The Council had committed to producing a report that would document youth problems and assets, and lay out a plan for change in city and county practices. While the Council was researching, the city of Oakland launched its own youth agenda. But the Council stayed committed to publishing its report, because it had learned that its documents created a community consensus about an issue and provided a written record of learnings and agreements that could keep stakeholders accountable during implementation.

Released last June, *Call to Action: An Oakland Blueprint for Youth Development* did just that, grounding the city's youth agenda in a proposal to organize youth opportunities, supports and services around "village centers," to foster a community-building, neighborhood focus to city and countywide youth programs. The Council has emerged as the hub of local efforts to bring Beacon community schools to Oakland, and worked on a ballot measure that set aside city tax dollars for youth services. Executive Director Gregory Hodge sees implementing Call to Action as making up a major portion of the Council's agenda in the year to come.

"What's our role now? To keep grounding youth development in the community-building point of view," Hodge says. "We're always having to make it clear: to show that Beacon schools aren't just about co-location of services, for example. Or that 'village centers' aren't a new 'program,' but a framework to pull together the whole range of options — supports, protections, opportunities — that young people need. And it's our role to help the city develop a meaningful infrastructure to back its commitment to youth development — the information systems, the oversight and monitoring functions, capacity-building opportunities for the field. The report laid out the work. Now we have to make sure the work gets done."

Lessons of the Urban Strategies Council

Experienced, independent leadership and a staff of "talented generalists" let the Council make an impact quickly on many different issues.

Intermediaries work best with a clear constituency for their reform effort, and strong community partners capable of implementing plans for change.

The multiple roles of an intermediary give it synergy -- but they can be challenging to reconcile.

Community organizing is beyond the scope of intermediaries, but they require a strategy to engage community residents at many levels in their work.

Community Building in Four Institutions

Although the five case studies profiled comprehensive initiatives, community-building principles have also changed the operating styles of many different institutions around the country. "A school principal, a community organizer, a CDC director, a hospital president — all of them will do better work and run better organizations if they're taking a community-building approach," says Joe McNeely, director of the Development Training Institute. Here are four stories of the way community building has built the capacity of local institutions — a housing authority, a nonprofit pilot program, a church network and a community foundation — to work more effectively for the people they serve.

"Can you love my residents?"

Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority

Annie Antoine and Kathryn Taylor had been neighbors in Cleveland's King Kennedy Estates for many years before they met. "I'd seen her out my window lots of times, coming and going, but I never spoke to her," Taylor recalls. "Back then I just stayed inside my apartment, because it wasn't safe outside." The hallways and stairwells of the grim housing complex belonged to drug dealers and their customers, and law abiding residents like Taylor kept to themselves, behind double-locked doors and a wall of their own despair and powerlessness. "King Kennedy was the worst mess I've ever seen in my life," says Claire Freeman, chief executive officer of the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA), which runs the complex. She shudders at the memory.

Today Antoine and Taylor are friends and allies in an effort to take back their housing estate from drugs, crime and hopelessness. "We just had to wake up our minds to community," says Antoine. With the help of CMHA, a corner of King Kennedy has turned into "Renaissance Village," a showplace of 90 renovated townhomes, each with their own front door — the dangerous stairwells and hallways have been eliminated — where flowers bloom in windowboxes and residents watch one another's children on brand new playgrounds.

Governed by a covenant committing neighbors to live drug free and responsibly, the Village has a long waiting list, but the new approach is spreading. Across a field from Renaissance, the brand-new Delaney Village is just opening, and Freeman intends to organize all of King Kennedy's apartments into villages, under a community covenant that promotes strong families, resident engagement and self-sufficiency.

In Cleveland, tough, talented management, backed by a citywide commitment to community building, has created a model housing authority out of an agency that seven years ago was one of the nation's worst. Since the arrival of Freeman and Chief Operating Officer Ronnie Davis in 1990, CMHA climbed out of federal receivership and $2.7 million in red ink to win HUD's "Greatest Improved Performance Award" in 1994. Almost 5,000 of the authority's 12,000 units have been renovated, the vacancy rate is down to 3 percent and the estates boast a new network of community services, from health clinics to job apprenticeship programs to the nation's only public housing-based residential treatment program for drug users and their children.

The hallmark of the Freeman-Davis administration, observers say, has been high standards and respect for residents. Government liaison Sandra Terry, who came from IBM, saw it in her job interview with Davis, a HUD veteran who grew up in public housing. "He looked over my résumé and said, 'It's clear you're qualified to do the work. But I need to know one thing: Can you love my residents?' I'd never heard a question like that in my life! I thought about it, and I said 'Yes! I can love your residents.' And I knew this was going to be a different kind of job."

The housing agency's turnaround is just one of several Cleveland community-building successes. After hemorrhaging jobs and residents in the 1960s and 70s, Cleveland has gained population and business over the last decade. New housing is going up around the city, including low and moderate income units developed by the city's strong network of community development corporations. Against stiff political odds Cleveland was chosen a federal empowerment zone in 1995, receiving $177 million in federal grants and loans for its community development agenda. A community-building initiative has developed "village councils" in four low-income neighborhoods, including Renaissance Village, to build residents' capacity to chart a community agenda. "There's a synergy to all these efforts in Cleveland," says Steven Minter, president of the Cleveland Foundation. "We've had a massive organizing and education process around community building."

The Cleveland Foundation deserves some credit for the community-building synergy. In the late 1980s it funded a landmark study of Cleveland poverty, which provided the framework for a broad-based Commission on Poverty, linking corporate executives, community activists and religious leaders to craft a new strategy for opportunity. Directed by Arthur Naparstek (Minter calls him "the intellectual entrepreneur"of Cleveland's community-building movement), the Commission laid out a blueprint to replace fragmented, deficit-driven, top-down programs with approaches that were comprehensive, asset-driven and guided by residents — in short, a community-building agenda.

The Commission's 1992 report proved to be influential locally and nationally. Sen. Barbara Mikulski credits it with providing the intellectual basis for HUD's innovative, $2 billion Hope VI program to advance community building in blighted public housing developments — which in turn has provided $90 million to the reform efforts of CMHA.

And Cleveland's Hope VI effort is, appropriately, "a model for the country," says Naparstek, who is now documenting for HUD and the Urban Institute how community-building strategies can improve public housing. It's Hope VI that provided much of the funding to transform Renaissance Village and several other projects. The turnaround of Renaissance Village, Naparstek says, is providing lessons about what it takes to make a housing project a community.

One pillar of the new approach is tenant training sessions, which "woke us up to the power of community," says Annie Antoine. Residents who'd never met before came together to discuss values and craft the covenant they would have to sign to live in the renovated townhomes. Subsequent trainings have focused on child rearing, communications skills and anger management. Neighbors learned how to supervise one another's children and maintain high standards for visitors' behavior. An ongoing conflict resolution process lets neighbors having problems enlist the help of peers in settling trouble. "We realized we had the power to run our own community," says Antoine.

Reducing crime has also been crucial. The housing authority's police force has grown from 14 to 268 since 1990, and boasts its own SWAT team, gang intervention unit and drug sniffing dogs. "Ninety percent of those arrested are not public housing people," notes Freeman, who insists that lax security has allowed drug dealers and others to prey upon public housing residents without consequence. Tenants seem to agree. "We're letting everybody know that the people who live in public housing aren't 'undesirables'," Antoine says. "We had friends who wouldn't come visit us before. The most important thing is a safe environment." There were no arrests in Renaissance Village last year.

And yet there's occasionally tension over a tough question. Can a public agency catalyze and maintain a community building agenda by itself? Probably not, says John Ward, who staffs the Renaissance Village Council of the Cleveland Community Building Initiative. "The people I work with, they're used to government agencies taking care of them. And the agencies are used to just getting things done, without involving residents as part of a team. But community building means they have to do it together."

It's not always easy. When CMHA began planning a child care center at Renaissance Village, residents asked for an extended-hours program, but CMHA brought in a traditional daytime Montessori program, for the children of women who are working or going to school. Some residents were angry that the center didn't provide round the clock care, others that it won't provide drop-in care for those going to community meetings, but not yet involved in work or training; still others thought it should have provided training for residents to do child care.

"CMHA did its best, and there were real obstacles to doing what the residents wanted — it wasn't like somebody just cut a deal," Ward says. "But because the residents didn't stay engaged in the process, some of them are angry about it." He sees the Community Building Initiative being about capacity building, giving residents the skills they need to have a place at the table with agency leaders used to getting things done alone.

Annie Antoine, who chairs the Village Council that Ward staffs, says the Initiative will keep pushing child care issues, while working to help welfare-dependent Village residents cope with the federal welfare overhaul. Although Freeman has pushed to employ residents in housing renovation, and negotiated apprenticeship programs with several unions, there is widespread fear that there won't be enough jobs around to replace welfare. But residents believe they can build on the community spirit already catalyzed by the agency's reforms. "I see our role as being mentor to the women who aren't ready yet," says Antoine, who is employed as a management aide. "We can't just say to them, 'get a job.' You have to say, 'Here's where you can get training. Here's where you can get child care. Here's a GED class if you need it'."

Freeman sees power in that neighbor-to-neighbor strategy. "You have people like Ms. Antoine and Ms. Taylor who are natural advocates. You see them in every community. We just gave them a spark, and some opportunity. Then you have many women who have some disability, depression, dysfunction. But when the natural advocates reach out to them, those women latch on to their coattails and get pulled along. Our role is catalyzing productive relationships between responsible adults. That's what we've done in Renaissance Village. That's how you create community."

"Do we want these men to change — or do we just want them to suffer?"

THE BALTIMORE HEALTHY START INITIATIVE

Daisy Morris was a "traditional health administrator" working in maternal and child programs until her moment of truth in 1991. "You'd have thought I believed in immaculate conception," Morris recalls, "because with all the programs I did for mothers and babies, I had nothing to do with fathers."

That all changed when she became director of Baltimore's innovative federal Healthy Start initiative, a health and education program to reduce infant mortality in American inner cities. Early in the planning staff member Joe Jones challenged Morris. "He said 'You're not relating to the dads.' And I realized he was right. So we began to change the way we do business. We can't raise children with mothers only. We have to be about forging relationships between father and child — and father and mother, where that's possible."

The focus on fathers is not the only thing that makes Baltimore's Healthy Start unique. Even before there was a Healthy Start, Baltimore was planning a pilot project to hire low-income residents as "outreach workers" to pregnant women, the latest innovation in attempts to reduce urban infant mortality over the last 15 years. Earlier programs focused on increasing medical care to poor communities, and improving access with mobile medical units and decentralized services.

Most recently, though, cutting edge programs have taken a community-building approach, realizing that poor women often need a network of personal and community support to bolster their efforts to keep doctors' appointments, quit smoking, stop using drugs or alcohol, eat well and learn to be a better parent. But in Baltimore, community builders are also reaching out to men, judging that there's no way to build solid families and communities without them.

"It started with me doing home visits to the women, and I'd run into the boyfriends, who'd be like, 'Hey, man — who are you, visiting my girlfriend?' " recalls Joe Jones, director of male services. "When I convinced them I was there to help, they'd say, 'Can you get me a job?'" Jones sponsored focus groups with local men, to ask what Healthy Start should provide for fathers. "And the first thing we realized is, these guys need to talk. We'd plan the meetings for an hour and a half and they'd want to stay three or four hours." So Jones began support groups.

Healthy Start also developed a 15-session curriculum on manhood and fatherhood, which right away needed some adaptation. "We hadn't planned a full session on domestic violence, but when it came up in our first class we spent three weeks on it. So we added sessions on power and control issues." Then the program added a jobs component, where men who regularly attended groups and classes were eligible for construction jobs starting at $8 an hour. Soon it will begin a "coparenting" program, teaching couples who may not stay together how to cooperate to raise their children — commonplace in middle-class divorced families, but less a reality for low-income couples, where a father's history of unemployment, drug abuse or prison may leave him with no relationship to his family.

Today Baltimore Healthy Start serves 160 men with eight outreach workers and two administrators. But the shift required more than adding staff and services. Morris and Jones had to challenge the mindset of programs that deal with inner-city women. "We were so much for the moms, sometimes we were perceived as being against the dads — as trying to get the woman away from the man, out of a bad relationship," Morris says. "Now, safety for our women is still critical. We don't want them in violent situations. But we also have to be about strengthening relationships. They may not stay partners with the dad, but they should have some relationship that at least lets them coparent their children."

Was the shift controversial? "Oh, it divided our staff," Morris says. "Some of the women we serve were opposed, too. It was like, 'You're gonna provide all these services for those low-down dirty dogs?' And I had to ask them, 'Do we want these men to change — or do we just want them to suffer?'"

It's not all hearts and flowers, Morris admits. "We have two or three moms sharing the same dad in our program right now," she sighs. "We deal with all of it." Jones knows some women remain unhappy with the services for men. "In some cases the relationship has ended and the dad's got a job, and the mom doesn't, and they don't get along, and the women feel like, 'Why are you helping him?' But I have the attitude that even if the relationship doesn't work out, it's better to have that man employed than selling drugs and hurting the community. And down the road he might develop a relationship with the mother and child."

Healthy Start offers a range of unorthodox supports for women as well. They play bingo after a morning of parenting classes. Morris just started a high-school equivalency class for

Healthy Start mothers, most of whom dropped out of high school, to put them on the path to employment or higher education. There's group and individual therapy, "because we're unearthing real depression and grief in these women," she notes.

The mothers get hot meals along with cooking classes in the afternoon. A federal monitor initially questioned that expense. "She said, 'Should we really be paying for this? Can't they just eat at home?' And I said, They should, but realistically, they may go hungry. And aren't we about a healthy start?" The monitor OK'd the meals.

The program isn't cheap — Baltimore Healthy Start has an annual budget of $7 million, and employs 80 outreach workers, backed by medical staff, child development experts and counselors. But so far numbers back up the comprehensive, community-focused approach. Infant mortality rates are down 20 percent in the target area, and healthy, full-term births are up, though official data won't be released until next year. Conservative George Will was so impressed with Healthy Start in Sandtown he called the outreach program an example of Jeffersonian democracy — people taking charge of their destiny, with neighbors helping neighbors.

"Sometimes healers need healing, too."

THE METRO DENVER BLACK CHURCH INITIATIVE

The teenage girls she works with call her Miss Reverend Gay. Pastor T. H. Gay doesn't look much older than some of the young women she serves, but in just five years this smart, serious minister at Denver's Grace and Truth Full Gospel Church has developed an impressive "outreach ministry" to girls that includes mentoring, tutoring, a drill team, and an occasional trip to the local beauty college. She works with preteens from the local middle school, and older teens in trouble referred by the juvenile probation department. Gay credits God for her inspiration, but she's also grateful to the Metro Denver Black Church Initiative, for seed money and technical assistance that let her find collaborative partners to expand her work. "The initiative helped us learn to partner without competing, and it provided a bond with other ministers we wouldn't have," Gay notes.

Since 1994 the Metro Denver Black Church Initiative has provided $380,000 to 35 church-based collaborations to fund a range of activities and services — what it calls "outreach ministry"— for low-income families. Its grantees provide everything from tutoring and counseling, to social services that keep children out of the foster care system. A project of Denver's Piton Foundation -- partners in the Rockefeller Foundation's Community Planning and Action Program -- along with the Ford Foundation, the Anschultz Family Foundation, the Leighty Foundation and the Hunt Alternatives Fund, the initiative has become a nationally respected model for how funders and service providers can tap the power of the Black church to rebuild low-income neighborhoods.

Piton's Grant Jones, the initiative's founder, traces its roots back to a 1988 grant he made to the Agape Christian Church, to start a Community Outreach Services Center that would offer job training, tutoring and other services in Denver's Five Points neighborhood. "Frankly I wasn't thinking about it as a church-based project, just an opportunity to get some programs in a neighborhood that needed them," Jones recalls.

It was a good investment. Today the Outreach Center is a Five Points institution, most recently collaborating on an innovative community-based family preservation program with the local child welfare agency. That early partnership suggested to Jones that the Black church might be "the sleeping giant in the community-building field."

Clearly it has huge potential as an agent for change in low income black neighborhoods. The heart of the African-American community since slavery, the church remains a catalyst for spiritual, social and political renewal. African-Americans give about $2 billion to churches every year, which represents an estimated 90 percent of all black charity donations annually. Already churches are ministering to a range of secular needs, not just the spiritual, with food banks, senior programs, tutoring efforts and informal assistance to congregants who fall on hard times.

Yet the government and foundation programs established since the War on Poverty have tended to bypass churches. Except for Head Start and some senior programs, churches have had little formally to do with the web of anti-poverty services in most poor neighborhoods. There are two sides to the story. Foundations and government agencies have been wary of subsidizing spiritual prosyletizing along with community service, but few churches, for their part, have aggressively pursued the funding they could capture, suspicious of the strings attached to public and private dollars.

The Metro Denver Black Church Initiative moved into that historical gulf between funders and churches, cautiously. It began with a survey to find out what kinds of services churches already were providing. The results were mixed. Three quarters of Denver's black churches sponsored some kind of secular service program, confirming that there was strong church-based interest in addressing community needs. But of the 274 church programs identified, less than half were offered regularly, and only 34 had any kind of outside support or funding. The vast majority depended solely on volunteers and therefore operated sporadically.

"So we previewed our findings with a group of 60 ministers," Grant Jones

recalls. The group favored an initiative that would support collaborative partnerships, either between churches or churches with outside agencies. They wanted a project that would provide technical assistance and support, on grantwriting, management, program quality and collaboration. Maybe most important, they looked for opportunities to develop relationships between pastors who wanted to expand their outreach ministry, so they could learn from and support each other.

Today the initiative has catalyzed an impressive range of services to low-income families and children, working with a broad spectrum of Denver's Black churches, from small, non-denominational churches like Pastor Gay's, to New Hope Baptist Church, one of the largest black churches in Denver.

"You're talking about a church and a pastor who you might think has done it all," says New Hope's Rev. James Peters, a veteran of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference who worked with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. "But it took the Black Church Initiative to get me doing tutoring again, to get me collaborating with another church — a collaboration that's hard, but worth it." When Peters found an inspiring young man to run his Rites of Passage program — but unfortunately didn't have the funds to pay him — he turned to the initiative, which found money for his salary. "The initiative gave me a way to get out and touch people where they're hurting," Peters says.

The involvement of pastors like Peters is in turn a draw for others. "As a young minister, it's invaluable for me to be able to rub shoulders with someone like Reverend Peters, who's really been a mentor for me," says Rev. Richard Wright, pastor of House of Prayer, a small non-denominational church. Wright was a career firefighter and long-time youth volunteer who three years ago felt a call to start a church, with his wife, to minister to the teenagers and young adults trying to make it on their own in their neighborhood. "They have no church training, and no home training either," observes Wright, who recently took in two foster children. "They haven't been cared for. We're finding young mothers who don't even know how to cook. The needs are just so great."

The Black Church Initiative sponsored Wright to go to the Atlanta-based Institute on Church Administration and Management, and facilitated his collaborating with two other local churches on a computer training project for young people. He's about to start a fatherhood program for young men in his community, and a residence for homeless young women. "There's no place else but the Initiative where I could have gotten this kind of help," Wright says.

Efforts in Detroit, Chicago and Los Angeles are also under way to build the capacity of the Black church to be a community-building partner. In Northern California, the San Francisco Foundation has sponsored an interfaith initiative to help churches, mosques and synagogues build community across racial lines. "The Bay Area is so diverse we felt we had to be interfaith and multiracial," notes Joe Brooks of the San Francisco Foundation.

In Denver, Grant Jones judged that he had enough work bridging cultures within the Black church alone. Divisions of class, denomination and ideology can be obstacles to an outreach ministry, even among African-American congregations. Some inner city churches today draw their congregants from successful black families who've left the neighborhood, more than from the low-income families who live nearby, and developing programs that meet the needs of both groups can be challenging.

But the initiative addresses those issues with a supportive, patient approach. Jones saw early that most churches have neither the staff nor the experience to write the polished grant proposals funders are used to receiving, so he and project coordinator David Washington visit every site that applies for funding, to personally gauge their capacity to mount the program they're proposing. For two years it has sponsored workshops to help ministers build administrative and outreach skills, but this year it added a retreat for ministers and their wives, where they could openly discuss the added challenges an outreach ministry can pose to a marriage. "Sometimes healers need healing, too," says Rev. John Shaw of Campbell Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, who sponsors a family counseling center with two other churches.

And it's careful to ground its work in scripture, not ideology. Coordinator David Washington, whose father runs Denver's Gospel Temple Church of God in Christ, always has a scriptural passage to back up his secular cajoling. At the retreat for ministers and their wives, a group got talking over dinner about how few parents today are raising their children in the church. Someone wondered aloud how much difference ministers could make when so many social and spiritual problems start in the home — a common worry when people are being honest about the challenges of community building.

Washington listens, and hears a biblical echo in their concern. He quotes from the Old Testament Book of Judges — "And there arose another generation in Israel that did not know God" — and suggests it's up to the church to bring young people to God if their parents cannot. A couple of ministers nod in agreement, and a door is open for Washington to continue preaching his message of outreach ministry. "We reach people where they are," Washington says, "and help them do that which Christ called them to do."

"I've changed so much personally."

THE MILWAUKEE FOUNDATION'S NEIGHBORHOOD AND FAMILY INITIATIVE

When the Ford Foundation began looking for local partners in its four-city Neighborhood and Family Initiative, the Milwaukee Foundation was a natural choice. The Foundation was already examining ways to have a more sustained, measurable impact in low-income communities than its traditional grant-making had allowed. With Ford's help, it zeroed in on the mainly African-American Harambee neighborhood on the city's north side, and began forming a broad-based community collaborative that would govern the local NFI. Ford contributed $2.4 million, the Milwaukee Foundation another $150,000. Neither knew what the investment would yield.

"There were no models," recalls program officer Sarah Ann Ford, who joined the Milwaukee Foundation to run the new project. "The Foundation never had that kind of partnership with the community before. It had to learn to accept an outside group making decisions about its funding. And it wasn't like housing development, where there are key things you need to know, and places to go to learn them. We had to learn a lot of it ourselves."

Six years later, as NFI winds down, its Milwaukee experiment has yielded new local institutions, an ongoing community collaborative, and maybe most significant, a community foundation that's been changed by the experience. The Milwaukee Foundation is one of a growing number of community funders that has come to play the catalyst role required by community building: convening, facilitating and brokering the relationships needed to make change in low-income neighborhoods.

NFI is just one example of that new role. It also partnered with the Pew Foundation in its Neighborhood Preservation Initiative, and played a key role convening stakeholders when Milwaukee made its successful application to become a Casey Jobs Initiative site. It has run its own neighborhood initiative in the mainly Latino Walker's Point area.

But its NFI involvement won the Milwaukee Foundation attention nationally. It was first among the four sponsoring funders — NFI also had sites in Hartford, Memphis and Detroit — to grant its 25-member community collaborative real autonomy in decision making and spending NFI dollars. What autonomy meant became clear early. When it won the Ford grant, the Foundation began planning a routine press conference to announce the victory, but collaborative members balked: They wanted to plan and run the media event themselves, and the Foundation agreed.

In another early debate, the collaborative convinced the Foundation to invest the NFI funds in a black-owned bank, and a black-owned savings and loan. The collaborative zeroed in on employment and economic development, spending little time working on the social services issues NFI was expected to address, judging that jobs were the community's highest priority. And several years into the venture, the Foundation agreed to secure a $450,000 loan so the collaborative could develop an industrial park it had planned, at the community's behest, from the early days of NFI — a tangible sign of its trust in community decision makers. "The Foundation stayed out of the decision-making all along, and that was unusual," says Ford.

The trust paid off. Along with the Riverwest Industrial Center, Milwaukee's NFI has spun off a community development corporation, a revolving loan fund to assist small neighborhood businesses, a sectoral employment project to provide training and support to residents seeking health care careers, and placed 460 local people in jobs. Its community collaborative has voted to keep operating even after NFI formally ends, and adopted bylaws and rules of governance to continue. The Ford Foundation's investment in NFI leveraged an additional $11 million for the neighborhood.

Milwaukee's NFI was also distinguished by the broad base of its collaborative, which includes a Milwaukee Foundation trustee, local corporate leaders, business and property owners, and low-income residents. Spanning the cultural divides hasn't been easy. "But every time you try to exclude a point of view you lose in the end," Ford insists.

"We've had a real mix of residents and outsiders, grassroots and professionals. And they've gotten along. The business people didn't understand why our meetings had to be so long, but they learned. We can't work everything out beforehand at the country club, or over a business lunch, like they do in corporate America. Our collaborative meetings are the only place people have to talk about these issues, so it takes some time."

Looking back, Ford sees a few things that might have helped NFI move faster: Better data about the neighborhood, prior assessment of community assets, wants and needs, and better training in collaborative decision-making models.

What does it take for a foundation to catalyze a community collaboration like NFI? "They have to be open to innovation in the first place, and the Milwaukee Foundation was," Ford believes. "They have to be open to community. I've changed so much personally. I had to learn to be much less controlling, to provide some vision and leadership and then step back, and know that I was doing it with a lot of other people, and it might turn out different from what I expected — but it would all be fine in the end."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"Community building means we listen to what the community wants, because they're the ones who ultimately have to get organized to solve these problems."

LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

As the introduction to the case studies explained, the community-building initiatives profiled are engaged to some degree on each of the five fronts outlined. All of the case studies have something to teach us on every front:

Engaging Government Systems

When the Casey Foundation began its New Futures experiment, no one could envision what an integrated service system would look like, or what it would produce. A decade later, thanks to New Futures cities and the other initiatives profiled here, there's consensus that the goal of systems reform is building relationships: replacing the professional-client model of social services with one that cultivates natural bonds of respect between families and those who would help them — be they paid social workers and youth advocates, or ministers, family members and volunteer mentors. "Government should be a catalyst for the development of social capital within neighborhoods," says Charles Bruner of the Child and Family Policy Center. "Defining government's role will require thought and experimentation."[17]

Community-building initiatives have been the site of such thought and experimentation, and will continue to be. In Savannah's Area C and in West Oakland, for instance, YFA and the Urban Strategies Council pushed to invest public dollars in community support networks, fledgling innovations that are still too new to see results. Sandtown-Winchester's Healthy Start showed how a community-outreach strategy could reduce infant mortality, and its education reform work proved that cooperation between schools, service providers and the community could give schools the community support they needed, and the community the school input it clamors for — which is starting to pay off in better school achievement.

CCRP's employment service provides a concrete example of how community institutions, focused on relationships, can help the inner-city unemployed move into jobs — an experiment with major systems implications given the recent welfare overhaul. To date it remains a privately funded innovation, however, and one test of its sustainability will be whether it can leverage public funding for its approach.

None of the initiatives has succeeded in changing the way large public systems -- welfare, health care, juvenile and criminal justice, the schools -- spend the bulk of their budgets, though Savannah may be headed that way. Ultimately, genuine systems reform is a political task. As Jim Rouse learned in Baltimore, community builders can't count on traditional political and economic forces to change government systems and transform poor neighborhoods. These are places where the market hasn't worked, and the political system hasn't either. At its heart community building is a delicate political undertaking, an attempt to orchestrate a powerful constituency for social change in neighborhoods that political and economic forces have marginalized. All of these initiatives have engaged political leadership to some extent — which accounts for their comparative success to date, contrasted with initiatives that were unskilled or uninterested in engaging political actors. But their ultimate success will require much more political work and strategy than even these strong initiatives have attempted. Block granting and devolution could offer opportunities for liberating public dollars to community-based agencies, but those local organizations will need capacity building to make the most of such options.

Building Local Institutions

Community-building initiatives need to start with an analysis of what assets exist in their target neighborhood or city, as well as what's missing. They need a vision of the array of public and private, formal and informal, individual and institutional supports that, if functioning well, would create a healthy, vital community. Successful initiatives invest in developing that array of supports, a civic infrastructure that will let communities and individuals continue to progress even after the initiative ends. CCRP was the clearest about investing in existing community institutions and letting them plan and implement a community-building agenda, but all the case studies show the importance of developing and supporting local institutions — from family resource centers to churches to schools — to provide the foundation of strong community.

While there are those who contend that specific institutions are the ideal vehicle for community building — community development corporations, family resource centers, churches, schools — the difficult truth is there is no one entry point or organizational home that guarantees success. Community development corporations, the vehicle for CCRP's transformation of the South Bronx, have many vocal backers, for good reason. With 2,000 CDCs nationwide, they have an infrastructure of technical and financial support, and the best of the field have a track record of operating in troubled neighborhoods and contributing to their revival.

Yet the vast majority of CDCs are small housing developers. Few CDCs currently have the expertise, track record or broad vision of CCRP's partners. There's not even firm proof that it's better to start a community-building initiative on the shoulders of a strong existing organization than to create a new organization from the ground up. "We thought we would at least be able to say, 'Start with an existing institution,' or 'Start from scratch,'" says Anne Kubisch of the Aspen Roundtable. "We saw there are tradeoffs with every choice."

Creating new organizations and governance structures can be enormously time consuming, as new leadership looks for ways to build trust, buy-in and a sense of possibility for the new venture. Strong existing institutions start with credibility and a track record, but they may have little relationship, or

even bad relationships, with other stakeholders in the community — and they will need time to build or repair those connections, too. "People are looking for shortcuts, and it's now clear that few if any shortcuts exist," says Kubisch. But it is clear that wherever they are housed, these initiatives need to be about strengthening the capacity of local institutions to move the community agenda.

Investing in Outreach and Organizing

Despite the impressive numbers of paid community advocates and volunteer block captains deployed by Sandtown-Winchester's Community Building in Partnership (CBP), the project has nonetheless struggled over the years about the form and function of community outreach and organizing. CBP began with a strong partnership with BUILD, an affiliate of the Industrial Areas Foundation — the venerable organizing powerhouse founded by Saul Alinsky — but its organizers gradually became "advocates" more responsible for outreach about issues on CBP's agenda, than helping the community set its own agenda. Several years into the project, some community members clamored for more old-fashioned organizing, to surface residents' desires and complaints independent of the program areas outlined by CBP. To this day, tension persists.

None of the other initiatives has invested heavily in community organizing, but all agree that their progress would be faster if there existed better models for engaging community residents in demanding and planning for change. Yet the projects' emphasis on consensus-building and involving diverse groups has meant that traditional organizing models, which tend to target an adversary — city hall, a bank, a local employer — and rally the community against them, are too confrontational, too premised on conflict, to advance a community-building agenda.

These projects are also trying to develop a new definition of community, one that includes middle-class residents, homeowners, professionals, project leaders; even funders and project staff and consultants; one that respects but doesn't romanticize grassroots partners. This is not without its tensions. Despite living in a relatively low-income West Oakland neighborhood, Urban Strategies Council Executive Director Gregory Hodge knows he's sometimes considered an outsider to the community because he's a middle class attorney. It's a notion he vocally resists. "I tell people, 'This is where I've chosen to buy my house, raise my family, do my work. I don't let them define me as an outsider."

To resolve these tensions, some projects have explored the "consensus organizing" approach, which began in Pennsylvania's economically depressed Mon Valley, in the shadow of the once-mighty steel industry. Consensus organizers pulled together unions, steel industry leaders, small businesses, workers and residents around an economic revitalization agenda, resulting in the formation of a regional collaborative, the Mon Valley Initiative, which has created $14 million in new investment. The model has spread to projects in Little Rock, New Orleans and Brooklyn, New York.

Unlike traditional styles of community organizing, consensus organizing strives to find common ground among diverse community stakeholders and focuses on relationship building as the foundation of community change. "Relationships free communities from the constraining and often false presumption that powerful institutions respond only to force," says Michael Eichler of the Consensus Organizing Institute.[8]

But many traditional organizing groups are suspicious of the consensus-orientation of most community-building initiatives, seeing "consensus organizing" as a contradiction in terms. The field will continue to wrangle over the best way to engage residents in community building, but there's consensus it must be done. In the words of Otis Johnson: "Our work would be much easier if we had people in the communities organized to demand more than the status quo."

Involving the Corporate Sector

The Atlanta Project did it best, but most of the initiatives profiled benefited from having corporate partners. "YFA got attention because this wasn't a group of do-good social workers, this was a group led by CEOs, who had the power and influence to get things done," recalls Don Mendonsa of Savannah. Even the Urban Strategies Council, perhaps least involved with its local corporate sector of all the initiatives profiled, got the inspiration for its public systems change initiative, the Leadership/Technical Team, from Council board member David Lawrence, chief executive officer of Kaiser Permanente, who knew the kind of time and energy corporations put into their own internal reform efforts — and envisioned government needing the same kind of support. The synergy between corporate partners and community-based leaders has proven critical at some juncture in every city.

But to date none of the initiatives have succeeded in getting much corporate support where it might matter most — in developing and expanding labor market connections for the unemployed in target communities.

The field has been slow to develop labor market links for neighborhood residents, and this item should top the community-building agenda in years to come. It is clear that government systems can't just "service" people out of poverty, and social capital won't pay the rent. Even the best system of health, education and family support will not, on its own, reduce poverty. The federal welfare overhaul will require that community builders and their allies get even more aggressive about linking poor urban residents to the mainstream job market, and creating work opportunities where mainstream employment isn't possible.

The initiatives profiled here offer insight into how to do both. CCRP's Employment Service, for instance, could be a promising model for reaching out to employers and linking

the unemployed to existing jobs, in the neighborhood and the region beyond. But private sector allies will also be important as community-building initiatives make the case for job creation strategies. Some employers now worry publicly that the welfare overhaul will throw millions of people into the labor market who the private sector can't absorb.

Community-building projects have shown that there's plenty of work to be done in low-income communities. The issue is creating public and private mechanisms to pay for it. They have proved that paying community residents for outreach, organizing, advocacy and service can yield double returns, building social capital in low-income neighborhoods while offering residents salaries and job experience that can lead them to other work opportunities. They've developed an impressive array of mechanisms — Oakland's community-building teams, Savannah's family advocates, Sandtown's health outreach workers — to accomplish both goals.

So private sector partners should be cultivated both to link residents to existing jobs and make the case for public jobs creation. They can also help ensure that new employment projects aren't simply make-work jobs with low-expectations -- a hallmark of past poverty programs — which neither build community nor provide low-income residents with the work experience they will need to move into the private labor market.

Developing New Structures

Community-building initiatives have involved a stunning diversity of participants, with no prior models for bringing such divergent interests together successfully. Very few endeavors in American society engage both elites and grassroots, not to mention government bureaucrats and service clients, non-profit groups and their funders, with a belief that the participation of everyone is important. Thus each comprehensive community initiative has had to struggle to develop a structure to sustain the complex, cross-sector work community building requires. The Urban Strategies Council is the best example of an organizational answer to these demands.

The other four initiatives profiled tried many innovations, but all came to function as local intermediaries in their given locale — mediating institutions that can serve as the hub of community building, coordinating existing strategies, catalyzing new ones and engaging the broader community in planning, implementing and monitoring the movement for change. Savannah's YFA went from being a collaborative intermediary to being a service provider, and is now trying to divest its services and evolve back to being an intermediary again. Baltimore's CBP set out with a decentralized structure, found it had to run programs, and is now trying to spin its programs off and become an intermediary — a "facilitative leader," in Mayor Schmoke's words. TAP found it couldn't work effectively in 20 different neighborhoods and closed its cluster offices to become a citywide intermediary to catalyze change. CCRP conceived of its five CDCs as neighborhood intermediaries, and Anita Miller's role is essentially that of intermediary between the CDCs and the wider world.

Other cities have developed community-building intermediaries out of different circumstances. They include funders consortia, activist community foundations, as well as self-described "locally based intermediaries" like the Urban Strategies Council. What they have in common is an attempt to build a civic infrastructure that will sustain a community-building agenda. These intermediaries have inspired a great deal of interest in whether and how other cities can catalyze similar mechanisms for reform. A report on community building by the Development Training Institute and the Urban Institute recommends "the development of one or more locally based nongovernmental intermediaries in each metropolis...to support community building: helping new community associations get organized and providing technical assistance and facilitation services."[19]

A core set of competencies is shared by community-building intermediaries:

- They function as a community convener, to bring diverse factions together around a problem-solving agenda.
- They use data as an organizing tool, to create a shared picture of problems and a common sense of urgency.
- They staff systems change and other reform efforts, recognizing that change requires staffing, but few community reform exercises have the funds to pay staff to keep participants on point and work on relationship building.
- Unlike traditional research centers or think tanks, they stay involved through implementation, recognizing that planning for reform is not enough — implementation is where most visionary efforts go off track and systems revert to business as usual.
- They help public and private agencies develop internal capacity to pursue a comprehensive, community-building agenda, since few agencies have the management, staff, information systems or organizational philosophy for the flexible, data-driven, asset-oriented, collaborative style that the new approach requires.
- They plan for new local funding opportunities, as well as track, monitor and assess new initiatives.

What it Takes: The Five Pillars of Community Building

As communities attempt to make progress on these five fronts, there are several cross-cutting themes and lessons. It's clear that on every front, community building comes down to capacity building, the effort to help community partners and stakeholders — government and foundation leaders and staff, community-based organizations, residents and business leaders — gain the skills needed to work in this new way. It's also clear that community building is not a "model" that can be "replicated" — as social scientists and policymakers might hope — but a set of values and principles that must be nurtured and encouraged. Capacity building efforts — in individual cities, and in the field generally — need to recognize that distinction. But certain assets have helped nurture a community-building agenda in many different settings:

Leadership

"He's charismatic, principled, and he doesn't hold a grudge. He can disagree with you one day, and be on your side the next. He cares about the issues, not about power." Savannah's United Way Executive Director Mike Williams is talking about Otis Johnson, but he could be describing the best leaders of other projects. In every city, skeptics shake their heads and dismiss the progress of strong initiatives as solely the result of having a charismatic, experienced leader. But with so much activity in so many cities, it's clear many such leaders exist, and the field needs to be about finding and grooming them, not dismissing leadership as an intangible that can't be trusted or controlled for.

"A lot of us come to this work skeptical of 'The Great Man' theories of history and social change," says Ralph Smith of the Casey Foundation. "We distrust the notion of charismatic leadership. But I think we need to face up to the fact that leadership is crucial to these efforts, and think about what it involves." Some analysts describe it as "servant leadership," that builds bridges between constituencies, fosters consensus and finding common ground, helps develop the capacity of community partners, is skilled at letting others take credit for change.

There was diversity in the way each project was led. Atlanta and Baltimore benefited from the leadership of high-profile sponsors. In the South Bronx, Savannah and Oakland, leadership was closer to the ground, and the projects benefited from day-to-day management of individuals whose wide ranging life experience acquainted them with many of the fields they needed to work in; but made them captive to none of them. The field will continue to experiment with leadership models, but it's clear success will be difficult if not impossible without a catalytic leader in most cities.

Patience

People in the field like to quote Monsignor William Linder, founder of Newark's respected New Community Corporation, an early CDC that now employs 1,400 people in businesses ranging from a Pathmark supermarket to day care centers. Asked how long it took before he knew NCC was making a real difference in its target neighborhood, Linder answers honestly, "twelve years."

The decade-plus of uncertainty might have been tolerable for a religious leader, who is trained to think in terms of eternity, but almost anyone else is likely to despair at such a long, slow climb. Yet it's unreasonable to expect five-year foundation or government initiatives to rebuild American inner cities. Their decay has come about over decades, and reversing it will take longer than most initiatives plan. Even this new generation of savvy community-building initiatives set out to achieve wildly ambitious goals on a shockingly short time line. Community building requires a much longer view.

Some of the faster-moving initiatives, like CCRP or the Urban Strategies Council, owe part of their progress to the fact that they built on several decades of activism on poverty issues in the South Bronx and Oakland — relationships had been created, a common language developed, the profile of poverty and race issues had already been raised. In Savannah, by contrast, it took enormous time to develop trust, common language and a set of priorities that crossed race, class and ideological lines.

Sandtown-Winchester is another example of a place where visible change took longer to produce than expected. A community might be on the mend before improvements in employment, school success, or child health are measurable, but without hard numbers public and private funders might understandably be inclined to pull their investments.

Good community-building initiatives know the benchmarks of community change that lead to long-term progress, and balance what the Aspen Roundtable identified as the tension between "process" and "product," the conflict between activities designed to create trust, relationships and buy in, and more efficient but less participatory bottom-line efforts, to build housing, health clinics or reform a school, for instance. With their emphasis on community participation, many initiatives understandably err on the side of process, devoting a lot of time and energy to extended planning and visioning exercises. Such activities may ultimately frustrate not just funders, but community residents, if there's no visible change as a result of their efforts. Activities designed to build relationships and increase participation must connect to the larger, long-term goals of community building: assembling a constituency for change and a set of relationships that can sustain it.

"Building community in low-income neighborhoods requires a strategy for making salient, short-term changes that attract people, inspire hope and empower the community," concludes Micheal Giles, TAP's evaluator.

TAP learned the hard way that spirit-boosting activities like cultural celebrations and health fairs don't necessarily yield tangible change, and switched course to attempt to make more concrete progress on a larger scale. Baltimore too saw resident participation drop off when the community-building projects yielded little visible change. In the South Bronx, CCRP tended to favor product over process. It staffed community planning exercises, but it also moved quickly on key local concerns — developing health clinics, building a retail center anchored by a Pathmark store.

In the absence of a community-building roadmap, project leaders and funders are learning to identify signs of short-term progress. "In New Futures, we knew Savannah and Little Rock were making progress when we asked them for "second-half" plans, and they refused," recalls Miriam Shark of the Casey Foundation. "They gave us 'second phase' plans, because they knew their work wasn't halfway completed, and they planned to maintain their collaboratives even once New Futures was over."

There are other markers of progress. Does the initiative grow to include a widening circle of stakeholders? Can it tackle controversial issues without falling apart? Does it know how to change course when progress isn't occurring as planned? Are there tangible signs that capacity is being built in key partners — in government, community-based organizations, residents, local business?

High but Realistic Expectations

All of the initiatives profiled had the backing of high-powered sponsors — national foundations, powerful business leaders, a former president — which clearly contributed to their success to date. Paradoxically, it may also account for the perception that they have accomplished less than they should have, because their powerful sponsors set unrealistic goals, which led to disappointment on all sides when the goals weren't met.

President Jimmy Carter, whose work in Nigeria helped that nation nearly eradicate Guinea worm disease, admits community building in Atlanta was harder than he expected, and his high standards created problems for TAP. "The expectation was perfection: that we were going to abolish poverty in Atlanta," Carter told the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. "TAP has not failed...I was the one who raised expectations too high."

Anne Kubisch of the Aspen Roundtable saw the expectation divide first hand in focus groups the Roundtable conducted on community building. "The top business leaders and the high-level foundation and government people all had a strong sense of urgency about how bad troubles were in inner city neighborhoods. They felt bold measures were needed to turn things around — and these initiatives weren't worth doing if they couldn't make a difference in a few years. But the neighborhood people working in the initiatives had a longer term sense of change. Even though they lived in these very distressed neighborhoods, they were more patient and realistic about what it would take to turn things around."

These troubles are intensified by the demands of "comprehensiveness," which has proven paralyzing in a number of initiatives where leadership felt forced to do everything at once. That dynamic was evident in the Rockefeller Foundation's Community Planning and Action Program, when the Urban Strategies Council chose early childhood education as its first project in Oakland, and made quick progress, while other cities struggled to balance the mandate of comprehensiveness against the need to find a sensible entry point and introduce themselves to the community.

Community-building projects must understand and have a strategy for addressing the interconnection of the many issues that contribute to persistent urban poverty: unemployment, crime, housing, school failure, family trouble. But that doesn't mean they have to work on all of those issues at once. The best projects tackle what they're best positioned to make a difference on, and work out from there. Projects stall when they're paralyzed by the mandate to do too much.

Community-Wide Capacity Building

If the mantra in the 1980s was "comprehensiveness," in the 90s it's "capacity building," an innocent-sounding term that can be unsettling, even racially divisive — when a white funder or bureaucrat decides a community-based agency of color needs new "capacity," for instance. Smart initiatives know community building means that everyone needs the capacity to work differently, and funders and bureaucrats are high on the list.

Instead of talking generally about the need to build capacity — which can sound like a charge of incompetence — it helps to talk about the skills that are needed to advance a community-building agenda. Public and private agencies, for instance, need much better data capacity and information systems. Their staff need to be trained in community building: to collaborate, to be partners with families, to spot and support existing personal relationships and community institutions that will encourage and sustain community change.

New and expanding organizations may need help with board development, grant-writing and staff management. (See the profile of the capacity-building efforts of the Metro Denver Black Church Initiative for more examples.) Funders need more patience, better capacity to work with community residents, and more sophistication about the short-term benchmarks of long-term change. Community residents need opportunities for leadership development, and training to learn the fiscal, personnel and organizational issues involved in serving in governance roles.

The field itself needs better training in what's involved in a community-building approach. When New Futures began, the Casey Foundation provided training in narrow issue areas — teen pregnancy, education reform, case management, financing — but project leaders quickly found they

had very different needs. "We needed political skills," recalls Don Crary, executive director of New Futures for Little Rock Youth. "How do you build a collaborative process, how do you build leadership across communities, how do you develop consensus, how do you negotiate and mediate and manage conflict? That was so different from the technical assistance we had."

The best initiatives have created opportunities for self-reflection and mid-course correction that compensate for the lack of adequate technical assistance. And in recent years the number of support organizations have increased, to include the National Community Building Support Center, the Development Training Institute, Chapin Hall Center for Children and Families, the Aspen Roundtable, the Center for Community Change, the Center for the Study of Social Policy and others.

Courage and Candor about Race

On a good day in a successful project it feels like the unfinished business of the civil rights movement is being completed before one's eyes, as people of every race and class background work together for the community's good. On a bad day in a struggling project tensions around race and class can explode in a nightmare of suspicion and hostility.

The attacks on Jim Rouse in Baltimore showed how quickly racial distrust can poison even well-intended efforts for change. In Atlanta, TAP Director Jane Smith admits many black residents of the city distrusted the well-funded juggernaut headed by President Jimmy Carter and mostly white advisers. "When the project began the pictures in the newspaper were of white people who were coming in to 'save' Atlanta. It made *me* uncomfortable at the time," says Smith, an Atlanta native who is African-American.

A racially diverse leadership group is critical to community-building projects. In Savannah, the New Futures initiative was able to zero in on the troubles of the black community, and young African-American men, thanks to the leadership of Otis Johnson, whose history of community advocacy enabled him to deflect suspicions that the project was out to "stigmatize" black people — a problem in New Futures cities lacking high-profile black leadership.

"It shows the importance of having strong advocates in the black community and the white community," Johnson says. "I can go into the black community and explain why we're focusing on these black men. And Don Mendonsa can go into the white community and tell them why they ought to support our efforts. You need good, strong credible leaders in both communities singing the same song and being used strategically."

"The problems we had with race weren't about anyone being a bad person, it was that they didn't understand the territory they were working in," says TAP's Jane Smith. "I firmly believe that anyone, whatever their race, can do this work but we need to give them an understanding of the territory of community building."

And it can work both ways. White staff and volunteers frequently need to confront their stereotypes about poor communities of color, their expectation that they will talk while others listen, lead while others follow. (See sidebar, "Race Matters.") But black staff and community residents may need help distinguishing between racism, and honest differences over strategies or operating styles, in order to defuse destructive racial conflict. Helen Catron's support for Nick Snider, in the face of community suspicion about the motives of a white business leader, is an inspiring example of how a racially mixed leadership team can defuse racial tension.

In cities with more diversity than Atlanta's traditional black-white checkerboard, racial politics will be even more complicated. In Oakland, African-American leadership let the Urban Strategies Council take on tough issues relating to black poverty, the way Otis Johnson could in Savannah. But the city's diversity meant the Council had to work harder to gain the trust of Latinos and Asians, who suffer poverty in numbers comparable to the black community. The Council did so by assembling a racially diverse staff and by its skillful use of data, which let it identify the issues most troubling to different racial groups. In its school reform work it held community meetings in virtually every Oakland neighborhood, providing translators for Latino and Asian ethnic groups, and publishing materials in four different languages.

Most of the projects profiled in this report feature racially mixed staff working chiefly in low-income African American neighborhoods. That choice of projects was not intentional, but it can't be considered accidental either. Emerging from the debate over whether there is a black urban "underclass," the community-building movement is as much an attempt to complete the business of the civil rights movement as of the War on Poverty.

Committed to inclusion, the community building movement is resolutely multiracial. Yet every day in every project, staff and residents must contend with racial questions that the nation has few models for resolving. Reflecting on that experience, Don Crary of New Futures for Little Rock Youth, who is white, and Otis Johnson, director of Savannah Youth Futures Authority, who is black, sat down for a frank conversation with Joan Walsh about what New Futures taught them about race, class, culture and community building.

DON CRARY: At points in New Futures, people would apply for jobs, and they'd call and say, "Look, I'm really interested, but can a white person get this job?" And I'd have to say, "Well, of course." But watching the workers who had impact convinced me that matching by race and ethnicity was really important. It wasn't that someone of a different race couldn't do it, but they had to be truly exceptional, and it took a lot longer. I think we discount that. We think there's a body of professional skills that makes for good service, certainly not something as personal as race and ethnicity. I think we discount that far more than we should, as an important ingredient in service delivery.

OTIS JOHNSON: That's because some of us want to believe that race and ethnicity are not as important as they are in this society. But when we start talking about capacity development and in-service training, we're going to have to be very frank about the important role of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual persuasion, if we want to be good at serving the needs of certain populations. We've got to make that a critical factor in who the workers are.

But race isn't everything. You can certainly see in the educational system that there are whites who do an excellent job working with blacks, while some of the most dangerous teachers are African Americans who can be dangerous because of their own stereotypes and problems.

CRARY: I've also come to understand the enormous burden we put on black people in doing this work. The way we say, "Come and represent your community and figure out how to make us hear you, and tell us things that we should know already."

JOHNSON: What I find so ironic is that African American community people in the police — that there is not to [sic] protect them 24/7 in the place of the church in the black community. Or why people in the white community don't expect folks there did in Little Rock — when there's clear that four white men met precisely for breakfast before a supposedly public collaborative meeting just to talk about something that's on the agenda. Sometimes I look back and think, I might not apply for the director's job again. I didn't apply until they'd gone through one round of interviews, and I told them I felt they should hire an African American. And I feel today that it's probably even more important.

WALSH: Were there any advantages to your being white?

CRARY: I got to go to those breakfast meetings with four white men before the meeting at night! (laughs) Sometimes I think, would the people on the collaborative have worked as well with a black director to make it successful? And I don't know.

JOHNSON: I had a different challenge being black. When I looked for a No. 2 person, I wanted a racial mix, and I hoped to find a sensitive, talented person who could do the work, and who happened to be white. I was lucky to find her in Gaye Smith, who was at the United Way during our planning process, so I knew her skills and her temperament.

One thing I've tried to do in Savannah is be a diplomat to the white community, to try to help them understand the black community's reality. I think white people have a psychological defense mechanism about taking in how bad things are in poor black communities. If you have too many things that you think you can't have any impact on, then it shatters your image of your ability to control your life. There is a level of that at work, and then I think there's just simply a level of racism, and I have to differentiate between the two when I'm talking to folk. Are you a caring person who is sheltering yourself from this harsh reality — it's a way to keep sane — or do you just believe that these people don't deserve any better? Now that's very different, and part of my engaging with white people is to discern which one of those things is at work, because I have to know.

WALSH: How do you discern it?

JOHNSON: Well, I'm black for 24 years. I'm old, it helps (laughs). I've lived around white people all my life. It's like W.E.B. DuBois says, I have that sense of "twoness." But white folk rarely develop the same sense of "twoness" even with a lot of exposure to black people.

WALSH: You have to be bicultural, I guess, and we don't. But in community building work, we do, and the more I do this work the more I recognize certain white traits. We talk too much, we don't listen enough, we act like we're in charge all the time.

JOHNSON: That's right, you're in charge! (laughs)

CRARY: The other wonderful tendency my people have is to believe that we can solve it if it's going to be solved. But community building recognizes that in fact we can't solve it, that the solutions lie in the community, and we need to transfer authority and resources there to allow them to do that. That is an enormous leap for white people.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Community building was a rejoinder to an "underclass" analysis of American poverty -- the notion that an urban underclass had been spawned by the expansion of welfare in the 1960s, and could only be reduced by cutting welfare and requiring recipients to work.

Community builders rejected the underclass label. They put urban poverty in its historical context, and resisted the attempt to depict the 1980s poor as different from their predecessors. The problem was not that the urban poor had changed, they argued, but that the communities around them had, and a solution to poverty lay in restoring the social fabric that once helped poor urban families join the mainstream. The progress made in the cities profiled here, along with declines in teen pregnancy, infant mortality, violent crime and school dropout rates nationwide, shows that the community builders' emphasis on fostering relationships and social networks in poor neighborhoods is beginning to pay off.

There are some caveats about community building worth mentioning in conclusion. With their focus on neighborhoods, local assets and residents' self-reliance, projects must not send the message that poor communities can renew themselves alone, when so many factors that contribute to their poverty are far beyond their control. Local action is crucial, but so are connections with metropolitan, regional and even national responses to urban problems.

In the 1990s, with global economic change spreading insecurity from the poor through the middle class, it is even clearer that a long term answer to urban poverty must include not just neighborhood action, but a nationwide commitment to better schools and universities, worker education and retraining, improved health and child care options, a higher minimum wage, earned income credit and other support for low-wage workers. The impending welfare overhaul will make such support even more crucial, as millions of poor women with children flood the bottom tier of the labor market, with effects no one can predict.

Still, the effort to build community in poor urban neighborhoods is a necessary and inspiring precondition for such political and economic reform. As the nation prepares to make welfare reform reality, it should build on the premises of community building, rather than a grim underclass analysis. New programs should learn from the networks of self-help and social support that community-building initiatives have catalyzed, for instance, and develop supportive community pathways to employment for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) mothers. Where employment isn't available, they must borrow the job creation strategies that have built social capital and put people to work in low-income neighborhoods.

Welfare cuts that simply drive poor mothers into the low-wage job market, leaving their children without adequate care, will swamp these islands of urban renewal in a tidal wave of misery. But welfare reform premised on community building could complete the renewal of inner city neighborhoods that is underway, and make our cities the center of equal opportunity and social mobility they were in generations past.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Acknowledgements

This report reflects the wisdom and experience of many dozens of people around the country. I am especially grateful to the project directors and staff quoted in the case studies, who gave so much of their time and insight to help me understand their communities. My writing and thinking were improved enormously by the many people who read and critiqued early drafts, including Debbie Greiff, Craig Howard, Susan Lubeck, Kevin Williams, Art Naparstek, Anne Kubisch, Miriam Shark, Alfonso Wyatt, Roberto Garcia, James O. Gibson, Sandy Close, Franz Schurmann and Joseph McNeely. I would also like to thank my uncle, Eugene Walsh, whose thoughtful tour of our South Bronx ancestral home catalyzed my best thinking about community building.

I am enormously grateful to the Rockefeller Foundation for the chance to spend a year learning and thinking and writing about this field. I must especially thank Angela Glover Blackwell, whose professional and personal support has been invaluable over many years, not just the last; and Julia Lopez, Denise Gray-Felder, Carol Mensah, Chet Hewitt and Raymond Colmenar. The Annie E. Casey Foundation sponsored the frank conversation about race (Race Matters), part of a longer conversation about the lessons of their New Futures program to be published in 1997.

With gratitude and respect,
Joan Walsh

Footnotes

1 *The Values We Live By: What Americans Want from Welfare Reform.* Washington, D.C.: A Report from Public Agenda, 1996.

2 George Will, "The Free People of Sandtown," December 31, 1995. Washington Post Writers Group.

3 *Rebuilding Inner-City Communities: A New Approach to the Nation's Urban Crisis.* New York, NY: Committee for Economic Development, 1995.

4 Public/Private Ventures, "Making a Difference: An Impact Study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters," Philadelphia, PA, November 1995

5 Charles Petit, "Report says Counseling Helps Babies: Block infant weights tied to talks during pregnancy," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 4, 1996.

6 See particularly Robert Halpern, *Rebuilding the Inner City: A History of Neighborhood Initiatives to Address Poverty.* New York, NY: Columbia University Press. 1995; Peter Marris and Martin Rein, *Dilemmas of Social Reform.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1973; Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How it Changed America.* New York: Knopf. 1991; Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding.* New York: Free Press. 1969; Richard Cloward and Frances Fox Piven, *The Politics of Turmoil.* New York: Pantheon. 1972.

7 Charles Murray, *Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950 - 1980.* New York: Basic Books. 1984.

8 See Ken Auletta, *The Underclass.* New York: Random House. 1982; Mickey Kaus, "The Work Ethic State," *The New Republic*, July 7, 1986, pp. 22-33; and Bill Moyers' 1985 PBS documentary, "The Vanishing Black Family."

9 See William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, The Underclass, and Public Policy.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1987; and *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor.* New York: Knopf. 1996.

10 Nicholas Lemann, "The Myth of Community Development," *The New York Times Magazine*, January 31, 1994.

11 John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets.* Evanston: Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research. 1994.

12 *Building New Futures for At-Risk Youth: Findings from a Five Year, Multi-Site Evaluation.* Washington, D.C.:The Center for the Study of Social Policy. 1995.

13 *Investing in Community: Lessons and Implications of the Comprehensive Community Revitalization Project.* Mitchell Sviridoff and William Ryan. New York: 1996.

14 Gary M. Pomerantz, "Great Expectations, Humbling Reality," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, September 15, 1996.

15 Micheal Giles, *Evaluation of the Atlanta Project, Part 2: Analysis and Findings.* Atlanta: Carter Collaboration Center. 1995.

16 *Community Building in Partnership: A Program to Transform the Sandtown-Winchester Neighborhood.* Baltimore: Community Building in Partnership. 1993.

17 Charles Bruner, "Toward Defining Government's Role As Catalyst: Building Social Capital in Disinvested Neighborhoods." Des Moines: Child and Family Policy Center. November, 1995. p. 16.

18 *Strategic Engagements: Building Community Capacity by Building Relationships.* Boston: Consensus Organizing Institute. 1996. p. 19.

19 "Community Building: Coming of Age," in Community Building in America (draft). Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute and Development Training Institute. In production.

20 Elizabeth Kurylo, "'TAP did not fail.'" *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, September 15, 1996.